



**City of Houston  
Building Code Enforcement  
CODE WORD 2021**

INTERPRETATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF  
THE HOUSTON ADOPTED CODES,  
2021 IBC, 2021 IRC, 2021 IFC, 2021 IEBC, 2021 UMC, 2021 UPC,  
2021 IECC and ASHRAE 90.1-2019, 2021 ISPSC, & 2023 NEC  
Published 01-02-2024

## **CODE WORD 2021**

**INTERPRETATIONS & APPLICATIONS OF THE HOUSTON ADOPTED CODES**

*SUPERSEDES: CODE WORD 2015*

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 1/2/2024**

**REVISION DATE: 2/23/2026**

Section 104.1 of the Building Code states: "The building official is hereby authorized and directed to enforce the provisions of this code. The building official shall have the authority to render interpretations of this code and to adopt policies and procedures to clarify the application of its provisions. Such interpretations, policies and procedures shall be compliant with the intent and purpose of the adopted code. "

In compliance with the intent of section 104.1, the documents herein are published as CODE WORDS. The updated series of these documents herein will be referred to as 2021 CODE WORD and will replace and supersede all previous CODE WORD documents.

The purpose of CODE WORDS is to provide a single source of written interpretations, policies, and procedures to aid in the successful administration of the *Houston Construction Code* and city ordinances and to promote consistent, uniform practices and application.

The 2021 CODE WORDS are available on the Houston Permitting Center web site located at: <https://www.houstonpermittingcenter.org>.



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 24, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Building Permits and Applicable Code of Record</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>2021 Houston Construction Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>105</b>				

This Code Word interpretation is intended to assist with the identification of the correct edition of the *Houston Construction Code* for the design and construction of buildings or structures submitted for building permit(s) based on city practice and the provisions of Chapter 245 of the Texas Local Government Code.

The City of Houston recognizes that certain provisions of Chapter 245 of the Texas Local Government Code allow the use of the City's adopted codes in effect at the time the City receives the original (first) application for a permit for any purpose, such as administrative completeness, a plan for development of real property, or a plat application filed with the City for development of properties for a specific use or occupancy. The original application date locks in the construction codes in effect on that date for a five-year window for the series of permits related to the original application which are required to complete the project. A project is considered complete when a project final or Certificate of Occupancy is issued by the city.

Where any series of permits is required to complete the building or structure, every subsequent building permit required in that series necessary to complete the project may be based on the version of the City's *Construction Code* in effect on the date associated with the original (first) application received for the intended project. Where any such permit is suspended or abandoned for a period of two years, the permit shall expire. To resume work associated with an expired permit, the permit holder shall re-apply for the permit(s) for the project and pay the full permit fee(s) applicable for any previously uninspected portions of the original scope of work. As long as the project resumes within the five-year period prescribed by Section 245.005 of the Texas Local Government Code, the version of the City's *Construction Code* in effect on the date of the expired permit may still apply to the project.

Projects can be submitted under the following Houston *Construction Code* editions:

- If the original application is dated prior to January 1, 2024 then the 2015 *Houston Construction Code* can be utilized until December 31, 2029, if requested.
- If the original application is dated prior to April 1, 2022 then the 2012 *Houston Construction Code* can be utilized until March 31, 2027, if requested.

**Related Houston Building Code sections:**

**[A] 105.3.2 Time limitation of application.** An application for which no permit is issued within 180 days following the date of application shall become inactive and plans and other data submitted for review thereafter shall be returned to the applicant or destroyed by the building official. The building official is authorized to grant one or more extensions of time for additional periods not to exceed 180 days each, for a maximum of two years from the date of the original application, upon written request and justifiable cause demonstrated by the applicant. If an application for permit does not result in a permit within two years after the date of original application, the permit application shall expire. In order to renew action on an application after expiration, the applicant shall submit a new permit application and plans and shall pay a new plan review fee.

**[A] 105.5 Expiration.** Every permit issued shall become invalid inactive on the 180<sup>th</sup> day after its issuance unless the work-on-the-site authorized by such permit-is has commenced and been inspected by a city inspector within 180 days after its issuance, or if the work authorized on the site by such permit is suspended or abandoned for a period of 180 days after the-time\_date the work-is was commenced. The building official is authorized to grant, in writing, one or more extensions of time, for periods not more than 180 days each. The extension shall be requested in writing and justifiable cause demonstrated.

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*If work has not commenced under a permit within two years after the date of issuance or is suspended or abandoned at any time for a period of two years, the permit shall expire. In order to recommence work associated with an expired permit, the permit holder shall re-permit the project and pay the full permit fee applicable for any previously uninspected portions of the original scope of work. Where the original plans with building official approval are not available for completion of field inspections, a lost plan recheck shall be submitted for building official approval. Appropriate plan review fees shall apply.*

**Exception:** For the purpose of issuing a certificate of occupancy or a certificate of compliance, the building official may, upon request, reactivate a permit and perform a final inspection of work.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE**

**TITLE 7. REGULATION OF LAND USE, STRUCTURES, BUSINESSES, AND RELATED ACTIVITIES**  
**SUBTITLE C. REGULATORY AUTHORITY APPLYING TO MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
**CHAPTER 245. ISSUANCE OF LOCAL PERMITS**

**Sec. 245.001. DEFINITIONS.** In this chapter: (1) "Permit" means a license, certificate, approval, registration, consent, permit, contract or other agreement for construction related to, or provision of, service from a water or wastewater utility owned, operated, or controlled by a regulatory agency, or other form of authorization required by law, rule, regulation, order, or ordinance that a person must obtain to perform an action or initiate, continue, or complete a project for which the permit is sought.

(2) "Political subdivision" means a political subdivision of the state, including a county, a school district, or a municipality.

(3) "Project" means an endeavor over which a regulatory agency exerts its jurisdiction and for which one or more permits are required to initiate, continue, or complete the endeavor.

(4) "Regulatory agency" means the governing body of, or a bureau, department, division, board, commission, or other agency of, a political subdivision acting in its capacity of processing, approving, or issuing a permit.

**Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 73, Sec. 2, eff. May 11, 1999.**

**Amended by: Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 6 (S.B. 848), Sec. 1, eff. April 27, 2005.**

**Sec. 245.002. UNIFORMITY OF REQUIREMENTS.** (a) Each regulatory agency shall consider the approval, disapproval, or conditional approval of an application for a permit solely on the basis of any orders, regulations, ordinances, rules, expiration dates, or other properly adopted requirements in effect at the time:

(1) the original application for the permit is filed for review for any purpose, including review for administrative completeness; or

(2) a plan for development of real property or plat application is filed with a regulatory agency.

(a-1) Rights to which a permit applicant is entitled under this chapter accrue on the filing of an original application or plan for development or plat application that gives the regulatory agency fair notice of the project and the nature of the permit sought. An application or plan is considered filed on the date the applicant delivers the application or plan to the regulatory agency or deposits the application or plan with the United States Postal Service by certified mail addressed to the regulatory agency. A certified mail receipt obtained by the applicant at the time of deposit is prima facie evidence of the date the application or plan was deposited with the United States Postal Service.

(b) If a series of permits is required for a project, the orders, regulations, ordinances, rules, expiration dates, or other properly adopted requirements in effect at the time the original application for the first permit in that series is filed shall be the sole basis for consideration of all subsequent permits required for the completion of the project. All permits required for the project are considered to be a single series of permits. Preliminary plans and related subdivision plats, site plans, and all other development permits for land covered by the preliminary plans or subdivision plats are considered collectively to be one series of permits for a project.

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(c) After an application for a project is filed, a regulatory agency may not shorten the duration of any permit required for the project.

(d) Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, a permit holder may take advantage of recorded subdivision plat notes, recorded restrictive covenants required by a regulatory agency, or a change to the laws, rules, regulations, or ordinances of a regulatory agency that enhance or protect the project, including changes that lengthen the effective life of the permit after the date the application for the permit was made, without forfeiting any rights under this chapter.

(e) A regulatory agency may provide that a permit application expires on or after the 45th day after the date the application is filed if:

(1) the applicant fails to provide documents or other information necessary to comply with the agency's technical requirements relating to the form and content of the permit application;

(2) the agency provides to the applicant not later than the 10th business day after the date the application is filed, written notice of the failure that specifies the necessary documents or other information and the date the application will expire if the documents or other information is not provided; and

(3) the applicant fails to provide the specified documents or other information within the time provided in the notice.

(f) This chapter does not prohibit a regulatory agency from requiring compliance with technical requirements relating to the form and content of an application in effect at the time the application was filed even though the application is filed after the date an applicant accrues rights under Subsection (a-1).

(g) Notwithstanding Section 245.003, the change in law made to Subsection (a) and the addition of Subsections (a-1), (e), and (f) by S.B. No. 848, Acts of the 79th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005, apply only to a project commenced on or after the effective date of that Act.

**Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 73, Sec. 2, eff. May 11, 1999.**

**Amended by:**

**Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 6 (S.B. [848](#)), Sec. 2, eff. April 27, 2005.**

**Sec. 245.003. APPLICABILITY OF CHAPTER.** This chapter applies only to a project in progress on or commenced after September 1, 1997. For purposes of this chapter a project was in progress on September 1, 1997, if:

(1) before September 1, 1997:

(A) a regulatory agency approved or issued one or more permits for the project; or

(B) an application for a permit for the project was filed with a regulatory agency; and

(2) on or after September 1, 1997, a regulatory agency enacts, enforces, or otherwise imposes:

(A) an order, regulation, ordinance, or rule that in effect retroactively changes the duration of a permit for the project;

(B) a deadline for obtaining a permit required to continue or complete the project that was not enforced or did not apply to the project before September 1, 1997; or

(C) any requirement for the project that was not applicable to or enforced on the project before September 1, 1997.

**Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 73, Sec. 2, eff. May 11, 1999.**

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**Sec. 245.004. EXEMPTIONS. This chapter does not apply to:**

(1) a permit that is at least two years old, is issued for the construction of a building or structure intended for human occupancy or habitation, and is issued under laws, ordinances, procedures, rules, or regulations adopting only:

(A) uniform building, fire, electrical, plumbing, or mechanical codes adopted by a recognized national code organization; or

(B) local amendments to those codes enacted solely to address imminent threats of destruction of property or injury to persons;

(2) municipal zoning regulations that do not affect landscaping or tree preservation, open space or park dedication, property classification, lot size, lot dimensions, lot coverage, or building size or that do not change development permitted by a restrictive covenant required by a municipality;

(3) regulations that specifically control only the use of land in a municipality that does not have zoning and that do not affect landscaping or tree preservation, open space or park dedication, lot size, lot dimensions, lot coverage, or building size;

(4) regulations for sexually oriented businesses;

(5) municipal or county ordinances, rules, regulations, or other requirements affecting colonias;

(6) fees imposed in conjunction with development permits;

(7) regulations for annexation that do not affect landscaping or tree preservation or open space or park dedication;

(8) regulations for utility connections;

(9) regulations to prevent imminent destruction of property or injury to persons from flooding that are effective only within a flood plain established by a federal flood control program and enacted to prevent the flooding of buildings intended for public occupancy;

(10) construction standards for public works located on public lands or easements; or

(11) regulations to prevent the imminent destruction of property or injury to persons if the regulations do not:

(A) affect landscaping or tree preservation, open space or park dedication, lot size, lot dimensions, lot coverage, building size, residential or commercial density, or the timing of a project; or

(B) change development permitted by a restrictive covenant required by a municipality.

**Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 73, Sec. 2, eff. May 11, 1999. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 646, Sec. 1.**

**Amended by:**

**Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 31 (S.B. [574](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.**

**Sec. 245.005. DORMANT PROJECTS.** (a) After the first anniversary of the effective date of this chapter, a regulatory agency may enact an ordinance, rule, or regulation that places an expiration date on a permit if as of the first anniversary of the effective date of this chapter: (i) the permit does not have an expiration date; and (ii) no progress has been made towards completion of the project. Any ordinance, rule, or regulation enacted pursuant to this subsection shall place an expiration date of no earlier than the fifth anniversary of the effective date of this chapter.

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(b) A regulatory agency may enact an ordinance, rule, or regulation that places an expiration date of not less than two years on an individual permit if no progress has been made towards completion of the project. Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, any ordinance, rule, or regulation enacted pursuant to this section shall place an expiration date on a project of no earlier than the fifth anniversary of the date the first permit application was filed for the project if no progress has been made towards completion of the project. Nothing in this subsection shall be deemed to affect the timing of a permit issued solely under the authority of Chapter 366, Health and Safety Code, by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality or its authorized agent.

(c) Progress towards completion of the project shall include any one of the following:

- (1) an application for a final plat or plan is submitted to a regulatory agency;
- (2) a good-faith attempt is made to file with a regulatory agency an application for a permit necessary to begin or continue towards completion of the project;
- (3) costs have been incurred for developing the project including, without limitation, costs associated with roadway, utility, and other infrastructure facilities designed to serve, in whole or in part, the project (but exclusive of land acquisition) in the aggregate amount of five percent of the most recent appraised market value of the real property on which the project is located;
- (4) fiscal security is posted with a regulatory agency to ensure performance of an obligation required by the regulatory agency; or
- (5) utility connection fees or impact fees for the project have been paid to a regulatory agency.

**Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 73, Sec. 2, eff. May 11, 1999.**

**Amended by:**

**Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 31 (S.B. [574](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.**

**Sec. 245.006. ENFORCEMENT OF CHAPTER.** (a) This chapter may be enforced only through mandamus or declaratory or injunctive relief.

(b) A political subdivision's immunity from suit is waived in regard to an action under this chapter.

(c) A court may award court costs and reasonable and necessary attorney's fees to the prevailing party in an action under this chapter.

**Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 73, Sec. 2, eff. May 11, 1999.**

**Amended by:**

**Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 31 (S.B. [574](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.**

**Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 264 (H.B. [1704](#)), Sec. 1, eff. May 29, 2017.**

**Sec. 245.007. CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION WORK ON COUNTY-OWNED BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES IN CERTAIN COUNTIES.** (a) This section applies only to a building or facility that is owned by a county with a population of 3.3 million or more and is located within the boundaries of another political subdivision.

(b) A political subdivision may not require a county to notify the political subdivision or obtain a building permit for any new construction or any renovation of a building or facility owned by the county if the construction or renovation work is supervised and inspected by an engineer or architect licensed in this state.

(c) This section does not exempt a county from complying with the building standards of the political subdivision during the construction or renovation of the building or facility.

**Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 532 (H.B. [960](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2005.**

Approved:   
Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>February 1, 1996</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Existing Accessory Transit Shed</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>102.6 and 511</b>				

For existing accessory transit sheds constructed prior to the issue of this code word the occupancy shall be classified as a Group S, Division 1 occupancy as provided in Section 311 of the 1991 Houston Building Code. It is assumed that such use was legal at the time of construction and complied with the code of record at that time, as addressed in Section 102.6 of the Houston *Building Code*.

A new structure, building or the change of use of an existing structure shall be classified according to its use or character under the current *Houston Construction Code*, subject to section 511 of the Houston *Building Code*.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
**Building Code Enforcement**  
**CODE WORD 2021**

INTERPRETATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF  
THE HOUSTON ADOPTED CODES,  
2021 IBC, 2021 IRC, 2021 IFC, 2021 IEBC, 2021 UMC, 2021 UPC,  
2021 IECC and ASHRAE 90.1-2019, 2021 ISPSC, & 2023 NEC  
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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-B03</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>November 15, 1988</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Permit Applications for Various Project Types</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>105.3</b>				

The Building Official requires the following building permit types to be submitted as specified below:

1. New single-story shell building with multiple lease spaces or suites.
  - Once permit application for the shell and one permit application for each lease space shown in the plans. A certificate of compliance shall be required for every shell building (with and without shell lease spaces), and a Certificate of Occupancy must be issued for each separate lease space buildout project.
2. New multi-story shell, mid-rise, or high-rise building with core buildout, and multiple lease spaces or suites. Permitting options include:
  - a. Complete plans with buildout to all portions of the building – One project/permit application and number.
  - b. Phased permitting as allowed by the phased permitting guideline. Where phased permitting of a building is utilized and the submitted project includes a shell building and lease space buildouts – One permit application shall be provided for the shell building and the core (common area) buildout, and one permit application may be provided for each floor to allow for project completion and final on a floor-by-floor basis. Where a lease space is shown in the plans, one permit application for each separate lease space project is required unless floor permit application is a single-tenant floor buildout. A certificate of compliance shall be required for every shell building (with and without shell lease spaces), and a certificate of occupancy shall be required for each separate lease space buildout project.
3. Remodel of more than one existing city approved lease space or suite in an existing building.
  - A permit application and permit/project number shall be provided for each lease space or suite altered.

*Continued...*



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<b>Permit Applications for Various Project Types, Cont.</b>					

4. Remodel of more than one location in the interior concerning the “shell” or “core” of the building.
  - The number of permit applications is dependent on the building addressing created at the original permitting. Where original permits were pulled on a per floor bases alterations to the core shall also be based on the floor being altered and pulled on a per floor basis. Alterations to the shell building (which includes alterations to the exterior walls and/or roof, and the structural frame) shall use the shell building project number/address.
5. Alteration or remodel of the exterior of a building or multiple buildings.
  - One permit application shall be provided for each building altered or remodeled.
6. Alterations or repairs of any existing city approved lease space or building area shall not increase the wastewater load or the square footage of the existing building, existing lease space or suite. Any alteration that changes the use or occupancy, increases the occupant load, or building addition that increases the building area under roof as defined by the Building Code, or increases the size (area) of an interior lease space or suite constitutes an expansion or addition and is reviewed as new construction.

A Certificate of Compliance (CC) may be issued for the permitted scope of work at the option of the applicant once remodeling of an existing city approved lease space, building, or area obtains all required final inspection approvals from all appropriate sections, crafts, or trades.

**Definition:**

**Suite** – A group of connected rooms used as a unit.

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 9, 2014</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Acceptance of Flipped or Reversed Plans</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R106</b>				

Flipped or reversed plans may be accepted for residential plan review when the plans clearly indicate that they are flipped or reversed.

Due to the State of Texas engineering and architectural practice acts, when a plan is sealed by an engineer or architect all notations shall be stamped or printed on the plans. Handwritten notes on sealed plan sheets are unaccepted unless accompanied by an email from the engineer or architect who sealed the plans authorizing the addition of the handwritten note(s).

When plans are exempt from the Texas practice acts, and the plans are not sealed by an architect or engineer, notations may be handwritten.

Where plan sheets are sealed by an architect or engineer no changes may be made to the sealed plan sheets without written authorization from the architect or engineer who sealed the plan sheets. Otherwise, the plan sheets will need to be resealed, signed, and dated by the architect or engineer of record.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-B05</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>November 27, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Plan and Profile Drawings</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>107</b>				

A "conditional" permit for a project requiring plan and profile utility drawings may be issued prior to the plan and profile drawing approval provided the owner receives specific approval from the Building Official after submitting a written request to the office of the building official that includes all the following:

1. A description of the work requiring a plan and profile.
2. A confirmed compliance date.
3. A statement acknowledging and agreeing to the condition that if the plan and profile drawings have not been approved by the compliance date, as agreed upon, the City of Houston will not grant final inspection, the Certificate of Occupancy will not be issued and final release of utilities will not be granted.
4. An owner signed Notice of Action shall be submitted with a statement from the owner acknowledging and agreeing to the conditions that failure to obtain approval within the specified time may result in citations being issued pursuant to the code without any additional notice.
5. A statement releasing the City of any and all liability for the proposed project in the event that the City is unable to provide the specific utility services proposed in the plan and profile drawings.

The issuance of the "conditional" permit shall be approved by the Building Official with concurrence from the Utility Analysis Section Manager and written approval recorded in the permit database under the address and/or permit number associated with the project.

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>October 24, 1988</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Requirements for Engineer Seals</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>107.1</b>				

The Texas Engineering Practice Act, Section 1001.402, states that a public official of this state, or of a political subdivision of this state, who is responsible for enforcing laws, ordinances, codes, or regulations that affect the practice of engineering may accept plans, specifications, and other related documents only if those plans, specifications, and other related documents were prepared by registered professional engineers, as evidenced by the seal of the engineer.

**Section 1001.056** exempts the following from the provisions of the Act:

1. Any private dwelling, one-story apartment buildings not exceeding eight units, two-story apartment buildings not exceeding four units, garages, or other accessory structures pertinent to such buildings,
2. Private buildings used exclusively for farm, ranch, or agricultural purposes, or used exclusively for storage of raw agricultural commodities, or
3. Other one-story buildings, except public buildings, containing no clear span greater than 24-feet and having a floor area of 5000 square feet or less.

**Section 1001.053** exempts the following public works from the provisions of the Act:

1. A public work that involves electrical or mechanical engineering if the contemplated expense for the completed project is \$8000.00 or less.
2. A public work that does not involve electrical or mechanical engineering if the contemplated expense for the completed project is \$20,000.00 or less.

Plans submitted for permits will require engineer seals in accordance with state law unless specifically exempt or otherwise required by the Building Official.

The Office of the Attorney General of the State of Texas has determined that the design of air conditioning systems that licensed air conditioning contractors are permitted to perform under the Air Conditioning Contractor License Law (Article 8861 of V.T.C.S), serves as an exception to the Engineering Practice Act (Article 3271a of V.T.C.S). Accordingly, the Engineering Practice Act does not apply to design work performed by licensed air conditioning contractors.

Similarly, the designs of electrical and plumbing systems that licensed electrical and plumbing contractors are permitted to perform serve as exceptions to the Engineering Practice Act.

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 29, 1992</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Survey on Lot</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>107.2.6</b>				

The purpose of this policy on survey requirements is to assure that proposed construction does not cross any property lines without proper easements, does not extend onto or across easements without proper written permission, does not violate building line setback restrictions and does maintain the proper distance from underground pipelines or railroad easements.

Sufficient lot and construction dimension information must be provided to conduct a satisfactory plan review. Acceptable alternates for the survey may be one of the following:

1. A copy of the survey furnished to the buyer when the property was purchased is normally required for all title insurance policies. The owner either has a copy or one may be obtained from the mortgage company holding the note on the property.
2. A complete dimensioned site plan based on a property survey satisfies the intent for a survey. A dimensioned site plan signed, sealed, and dated by an architect or engineer, with a statement that it is complete, is acceptable. The site plan shall show all property lines, building setback lines, the location of all existing and new structures in relation to the property line and each other, the location and type of all easements. The site plan shall show all existing and proposed paving and driveways with dimensions of the width and radius of turns at the curbs. If the site plan appears to be incomplete or the drawing raises some questions to its accuracy, a survey may be required.
3. For single-family residential, a complete dimensioned site plan based on the property survey satisfies the intent for the survey. The site plan shall show all property lines, building setback lines, the location of all existing and new structures in relation to the property line and each other, the location and type of all easements. The site plan shall show all existing and proposed paving and driveways with dimensions of the width and radius of turns at the curbs. If the site plan appears to be incomplete or the drawing raises some questions to its accuracy, a survey may be required.
4. A complete dimensioned site plan is required for foundation repair. The site plan shall be based on the property survey and show the location and type of all easements, all existing structures and all property lines.

The following must be included on the site plan:

Easements for permanent encroachment where foundation work extends across the property line below grade in accordance with Section 3202 of the IBC for patio homes and zero lot line houses.

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 4, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Finals on Core/Shell Permits</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>107.3.3 and 110.3.12</b>				

Historically, in multi-story mid- and high-rise buildings when a shell and core permit is issued and then subsequent tenant improvement permits issued to begin lease buildout construction prior to the final of the shell and core, challenges ensue.

Past practice was to have the entire fire sprinkler system installed prior to a project final of the shell and core. Historically, the tenant improvement project final required complete installation of the ceiling to ensure proper actuation of the required fire sprinkler protection system. The installation was required regardless of activity on other permits; consequently, after the sprinkler permit approvals were obtained, in some cases a portion of the ceiling system needed to be removed to complete the tenant build out. This caused delays and additional expense to the builder without achieving any additional level of fire protection.

As a result, when a tenant buildout receives a permit and begins construction prior to completion of the core and shell permit and final inspection approval and project final, the following shall apply:

- The core and shell permit final approvals, including the sprinkler permit(s) applicable to the shell and core projects shall not apply to any portion(s) of the building that are under construction with a valid separate tenant improvement permit.
- Any work done under a tenant improvement will be inspected and approved under the tenant improvement permit issued for the buildout and will stand independently from the core/shell approval. Floors in a multi-story multi-tenant building shall be served by a completed shell and core build out project.
- All fire protection including fire pumps sprinklers and alarms shall be fully functional in all occupied spaces, including those areas or spaces providing access and egress to, and/or otherwise serving occupied spaces.

**Exception:** Fire Sprinkler heads may be turned down in preparation for ceiling installation in areas under construction with an approved buildout or remodel permit.

Approved:

Handwritten signature of Byron D. King in black ink.

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>March 6, 1985</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Partial Occupancy of Buildings</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>111.3</b>				

The *Houston Building Code* specifically requires a *Certificate of Occupancy* (CO) to be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises of all commercial buildings prior to occupancy. However, the code provisions of Section 111.3 allow for a *Temporary Certificate of Occupancy* (TCO) to be issued for the use of a portion or portions of a building prior to completion of the entire building or structure.

**NOTE:** A TCO will not be authorized for partially completed facilities associated with Group H occupancies or special use groups including, but not limited to, Hazardous Enterprises, and High Piled Combustible Storage. Final qualification of use and occupancy groups not specifically identified above will be determined by the Building Official and Fire Marshal.

Where a TCO is requested the fire- and life-safety requirements of the *Houston Construction Code* shall be operational throughout all areas of the facility approved for occupancy including all common areas of the facility utilized to access and egress occupied spaces.

This code word identifies the policy relative to issuing a TCO for partial occupancy of a structure and shall include all applicable provisions of the *Fire Code* for Fire Department and EMS access to the site and building, to the satisfaction of the Houston Fire Department, and shall include the following specific requirements:

1. The portion of the building where occupancy is requested must conform to all code required provisions applicable to the occupancy and use for firefighting and life-safety and shall include all required facility *smoke control systems* including, but not limited to the code provisions of **Section 909.16 – Fire fighter's smoke control panel** and **Section 909.19 – System acceptance**.
2. In structures with Type 1A, 1B, 2A, 3A, or 5A construction requiring fire-resistance rated protection of specific building elements identified by Table 601 of the Building Code; the building elements shall be protected up to and including the space and/or floor being issued a TCO for occupancy. Where the ceiling membrane is included as part of the fire-resistance rated floor/ceiling assembly, the entire assembly shall be installed up to and including the space and/or floor being issued a TCO for occupancy.
3. In structures where a standpipe system is required or provided, the standpipe system shall be in operation throughout the structure prior to issuing a TCO.
4. Where an automatic sprinkler system is required or provided, it shall be in operation throughout the structure as required by the Building and Fire Codes up to and including the areas receiving a TCO for occupancy plus one floor above. Where unoccupied areas do not include a finished ceiling membrane the fire sprinklers heads shall be turned up to protect the structure up to and including one floor above all occupied areas.
5. When a fire alarm is required or provided, the alarm system shall be operational as required by the Building and Fire Codes and appropriate installation standards throughout all occupied spaces of the structure receiving a TCO. Where the alarm is triggered, it shall include alarm activation on the floor of incidence, the floor above and the floor below.

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<b>Partial Occupancy of Buildings, Cont.</b>					

6. TCO requests for multi-story facilities and facilities specifically requiring *Fire Apparatus Access*, or facilities containing a specific use group identified in the *Fire Code* shall be inspected by the Houston Fire Department and shall include all occupied spaces prior to issuing the TCO. Where provided or required by the *Houston Construction Code* the following specific items shall be operational and inspected prior to issuing a TCO:
- (a) Appropriate *Fire Apparatus Access* and Fire-fighting access up to and including the site and structure, as required by this code word and the *Building* and *Fire Codes*.
  - (b) An operational *Fire Command Center* shall be provided in all high-rise buildings complying with provisions of the *Building* and *Fire Codes*. A list of all floors or areas receiving a TCO shall be included in the *Fire Command Center*. Other multistory facilities shall include a list of all floors and/or spaces receiving a TCO and be available onsite at a location approved by the *Fire Code Official*.
  - (c) Highrise *Fire Command Centers* shall include life-safety floor plans documenting the location of all exits. Other multistory buildings shall maintain life-safety floor plans documenting the location of all exits and be available onsite at a location approved by the *Fire Code Official*. Where stairwell roof access is required by the *Houston Construction Code* the location of the roof access shall be identified on the required life-safety floor plans.
  - (d) *Fire Depository Boxes* shall be included in the *Fire Command Center* of high-rise buildings. When required by the Fire Code Official, in other multistory buildings *Fire Depository Boxes* shall be provided in a location approved by the Fire Code Official. All *Fire Depository Boxes* shall comply with the provisions of the latest edition of *Life Safety Bureau Standard No. 6, (Currently Rev. 06) – Fire Depository Boxes*.
  - (e) Egress stairway signage shall be installed and comply with the requirements of Appendix H of the *Houston Fire Code*.
  - (f) *Fire department connections (FDC)* shall be operational, and signage shall be installed and comply with the requirements of the latest edition of *Life Safety Bureau Standard No. 2, (Currently Rev. 05) - Inspection and Testing of Fire Protection and Life Safety Equipment, Section 2.5.4.3*.

It is the intent of each TCO certificate to attest that the portion or portions for which the certificate is issued complies with all applicable fire- and life-safety codes, including but not limited to, the items specifically identified above. When requested, a separate TCO certificate shall be issued for each lease space, floor, or portion of the building intended to be occupied as the facility is completed. Appropriate inspections of items identified in this Code Word shall be completed and specifically required items of information updated to comply with the provisions herein.

**NOTE:** Every effort shall be made to complete inspections associated with a TCO request within 24-hours of scheduling with the appropriate inspection departments.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King", written over a horizontal line.

Byron D. King  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>December 23, 1986</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Life-Safety Certificate of Occupancy Inspections</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>111</b>				

The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines for the correct transition of occupancy classification and type of construction from a previous code of record to appropriate designations in a current adopted code. For a point of clarification, it does not make any difference what designations are shown on an existing buildings certificate of occupancy where the authority having jurisdiction can correctly convert the designation from the designations of the code of record that was in effect when the building was constructed to the current adopted codes equivalent occupancy, use and construction type. The following procedures shall be used going forward from the effective date of the *2021 Houston Building Code*. (*IE: January 1, 2024*)

1. The life-safety certificate of occupancy shall include the building construction type, occupancy classification, and specific use designation using the current code in effect when the life-safety inspection application is submitted to the city for a life-safety compliance inspection. Where the original construction date of the building or lease spaces is known the code of record shall be identified on the life-safety certificate of occupancy to coincide with the follow historical code adoption dates:

2021 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 01/01/2024  
2015 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 04/01/2022 to before 01/01/2024  
2012 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 02/01/2016 to before 04/01/2022  
2006 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 12/30/2010 to before 02/01/2016  
2003 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 01/04/2006 to before 12/30/2010  
2000 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 07/15/2002 to before 01/04/2006  
1997 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 03/12/2000 to before 07/15/2002  
1994 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 01/26/1997 to before 03/12/2000  
1991 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 07/12/1993 to before 01/26/1997  
1988 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 03/25/1990 to before 07/12/1993  
1985 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 05/05/1986 to before 03/25/1990  
1970 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 06/01/1972 to before 05/05/1986  
1963 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 03/25/1963 to before 06/01/1972  
1958 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 10/01/1958 to before 03/25/1963  
1942 Code – Buildings submitted for permit after 04/28/1946 to before 10/01/1958  
UK Code – Buildings submitted for permit before 04/29/1946 and buildings annexed into the city.

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<b>Life-Safety Certificate of Occupancy Inspections, Cont.</b>					

2. No life-safety certificate of occupancy will be issued unless the building complies with appropriate provisions of the following:
  - A. The code of record (IE: The building code that was in effect when the building was constructed.)
  - B. Section 102 of the Houston Building Code.
  - C. Appendix D of the *2021 Houston Amended Existing Building Code*, and
  - D. Chapter 10 of the City Code when applicable.
3. All buildings permitted before 04/29/1946 and buildings annexed into the city will be inspected for compliance with Section 102 and the Houston amended *2021 Existing Building Code Life Safety Appendix D – Life-safety Requirements for Existing Buildings*, and appropriate provisions of *Chapter 10 of the City Code*.
4. Fees for a life-safety certificate of occupancy inspection for existing buildings and lease spaces shall be as specified by Section 118.2.3 of the Houston Building Code and specifically addressed in the city fee schedule for “*Certificate of Occupancy for Existing Building*”.

Approved:

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>August 13, 2013</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Existing Certificate of Occupancy Validity</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>111</b>				

Prior to occupancy of a building, or portion thereof, Section 111 of the building code requires a *Certificate of Occupancy (CO)* to be issued by the *Building Official* to indicate the building, or portion thereof, has been reviewed, inspected, and approved for compliance with the adopted code for the specific use and occupancy present. Existing buildings shall be maintained in accordance with the provisions of Section 101.4.4 of the *2021 Houston Building Code*.

**[A] 101.4.4 Property maintenance.** *Buildings, structures, premises and the equipment and systems installed therein shall be maintained in accordance with the provisions of the code of record under which the building, structure, premise and equipment and system was installed and the provisions of the Property Maintenance Code, as defined in Chapter 2 of this code.*

Each CO issued applies only to the specific space, use, occupant load and floor plan configuration originally inspected and approved. Every CO is valid for the life of the building or space only where no changes have occurred to the occupancy, use or egress system and egress discharge configuration and the space is maintained in good condition in accordance with the code of record, the *Houston Maintenance Code* and *Appendix D* of the *2021 Existing Building Code*. A Certificate of Occupancy may be invalidated due use changes and code violations, including but not limited to:

1. Changes to the originally approved design occupant load.
2. Use or occupancy change without city review or approval.
3. Expired renovation permit, or expired occupancy or use change permit.
4. Unpermitted alterations to existing space or building.
5. Unsafe conditions that present a threat to public safety.

While permitting and inspection options may be pursued in some cases to restore an existing facility to compliant condition, a change to the city approved use or occupancy of an existing facility requires plan review and inspections as for new construction and a new CO. The following are changes in use examples requiring a new CO:

- |                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| - office to beauty shop           | - grocery to flea market          |
| - school to daycare               | - restaurant to dance hall        |
| - residence to boarding house     | - warehouse to auto repair        |
| - residence to personal care home | - warehouse to high-piled storage |

For other changes that may require a new Certificate of Occupancy, the Building Official shall determine whether the character or use change of an existing occupancy initiates a requirement for a new CO due to differences in code requirements.

Approved:   
Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>July 16, 2014</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Clarification: Posting of Certificate of Occupancy</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>111.5</b>				

Section 111.5 of the Houston *Building Code* requires every Certificate of Occupancy (CO) be posted in a conspicuous place in every building or space as applicable.

In multi-building complexes under common ownership, where a CO may be subject to damage or removal by unauthorized persons a posted copy of the CO shall be sufficient; provided the original CO is maintained in a management office located on site and is readily available for viewing by the code official or fire code official.

Where a copy of the CO is posted in lieu of the original, the posted copy shall contain the following statement:

*“This CO is a copy, contact the management office for the original certificate of occupancy.”*

**Exception:** CO copies authorized by the Habitability Ordinance, in Section 10-155 of the *City Code*.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 9, 2014</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Clarification: Sprinkler System in Four Story Residences</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Table 504.4</b>				

This interpretation is to clarify that an NFPA 13R sprinkler system shall be installed in all 4-story Group R3 one- or two-family residential structures. Where a proposed one- or two-family residential design exceeds three stories above grade an NFPA 13R fire sprinkler system must be provided to ensure compliance with the code provisions of Table 504.4 of the Houston *Building Code*. In Type V construction the fourth story is only allowed when the building is fully sprinklered by an NFPA 13R system.

Generally, fire sprinkler protection installed per the NFPA 13D sprinkler standard is allowed for providing sprinkler protection for a one- or two-family residential structures. However, the scope of the Houston *Residential Code* is limited to 3 stories in height.

Where a proposed one- or two-family residential building exceeds 3 stories, the structure is regulated by the provisions of the Houston *Building Code*. The Houston *Building Code* limits a one- or two-family residential structure classified as Group R-3 to three-stories maximum in height for Type V construction unless the structure is protected by an NFPA 13R sprinkler system as a tradeoff to increase the height and or number of stories. Section 504.4 and Table 504.4 of the Houston *Building Code* requires installation of an NFPA 13R fire sprinkler system for all 4-story Group R-3 occupancies.

This interpretation is to clarify the requirement and identify an effective date for all plans submitted on or after February 27, 2014.

**NOTE:** Group R-3 townhouses shall be provided with an automatic sprinkler system per Section R313.1 of the Houston *Residential Code*.

Approved:

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Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>May 23, 1997</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: School Vocational Auto Repair Shops (Exchange of Parts)</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Table 508.4</b>				

This interpretation is to clarify that classrooms located within a vocational shop area and used by the shop students will be considered part of the shop area and will not require a fire barrier separation to separate different occupancies. It is not the intent of the code to require a one-hour fire barrier separation between a vocational trade or repair shop space from other portions of the vocational classroom or between each vocational shop area of similar use and occupancy.

Approved:

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Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 9, 2014</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Smoke Dampers in Corridors</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>717.5</b>				

The *Building Code* requires smoke dampers to be installed in corridors to prevent the migration of smoke into the path of egress. The smoke dampers required by Section 717.5.4.1 for penetrations of the rated exit corridor are intended to protect the corridor path of egress from smoke migration from adjacent spaces. The dampers are required in fire-rated partitions that serve as corridor walls and smoke barrier walls in accordance with Section 716.2.2.1. The exterior wall to the outdoors is not an adjacent space within the building and therefore the corridor would not need to be protected from outdoor air.

Based on the code intent, as described in the code commentary and confirmed by ICC, the smoke damper is required when there are air transfer openings or ducts communicating with spaces inside the building. Therefore, when a corridor is served only by outside air and without air transfer openings to adjacent spaces within the building, a smoke damper will not be required for that location.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>November 28, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Electronic Locking Devices</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1010</b>				

When specifically approved by the Building Official, electronic locking devices may be used to meet specialized security needs such as, but not limited to: Alzheimer's units, infant protection devices, money handling rooms for security purposes, night operation of convenience stores or police stations, etc. Specific approval may be granted subject to compliance with all the following conditions:

1. The locked door shall be monitored at all times while the building or space is occupied by an on-site guard, staff, or employee trained in the method of releasing the locking device;
2. A separate permit shall be required for each door or locking device authorized by a specific approval, and;
3. A specific approval may be revoked at any time by the Building Official for due cause.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. King", written over a horizontal line.

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>October 19, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Main Exit Doors</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1010.2.4</b>				

This interpretation is provided to clarify that a building or space can have more than one main exit as intended and allowed by Section 1010.2.4 of the *Building Code*. Any door or pair of doors that are designated or used by the general public as an entrance and exit to and from any business shall be considered a main exit. Any door provided for exit purposes only will not be considered as a main exit and will not be allowed to use code provisions intended for main doors used as entrances and exits.

Approved:

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Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>May 19, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Double Doors Signage</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1010.2.5</b>				

Where a pair of doors serves as an exit door, the use of manually operated bolts (edge mounted or surface mounted) shall be allowed on the inactive leaf when this leaf is not part of the required egress width and all the other code provisions of Section 1010.2.5 are satisfied. The active leaf shall provide a permanently affixed sign stating, "THIS DOOR TO REMAIN UNLOCKED WHEN THIS SPACE IS OCCUPIED".

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 7, 1988</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Corridor Construction</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1020.1</b>				

When a common corridor serves mixed occupancies the exit with requirements shall be determined by the total aggregate occupant load of all occupied spaces.

Interpretation: When minor uses do not occupy more than ten percent (10%) of the area served the major occupancy or use shall determine the corridor construction requirements.

Approved:

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Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>August 13, 1991</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Restroom Openings Into Protected Corridors</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1020.7</b>				

A separation will not be required between a restroom and a fire-resistant rated corridor provided the ceiling and walls of the restrooms are the same fire-resistant rated construction as required for the corridor.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. King", written over a horizontal line.

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>December 10, 2013</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Block and Base Foundations</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building and Residential Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1809.9 (IBC) and R403.1 &amp; R403.2 (IRC)</b>				

This policy is an acceptable alternate as per Section 104.11 of the *Building Code* for existing buildings when performing maintenance or repair of existing block and base foundations. This alternative shall apply to conventional light-frame construction designed with girders and supported on blocks and bases in such a manner that the building can be easily leveled any time after the full load has been applied. For repair of existing block and base foundations, the following apply:

1. All loose material and vegetation must be removed to ensure solid bearing beneath bases.
2. End joints of girders shall occur over supports.
3. Minimum thickness of concrete bases shall be 4 inches.
4. The minimum width of the structure shall not be less than the overall height.
5. Girders shall not be placed further than the depth of the joist from the exterior wall.

For new and relocated buildings, as well as additions, block and base foundations shall be designed by a Texas Registered Professional Engineer to comply with the applicable code sections, or in accordance with Code Enforcement Standard Drawing No. 13-05-R.

This interpretation is applicable to all building plans submitted on or after March 1, 2014.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 1, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation/Policy: Shell Building Submittals</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>104.1, 105.1, and 107.2</b>				

The following interpretation and policy define a *shell building* and the specific requirements applicable to all shell building projects submitted for building permit.

**Shell Building** refers to a partially constructed building consisting of the foundation, the buildings thermal envelope (all exterior walls and roofs), and all required sitework designed to comply with all code requirements applicable to the intended use and occupancy.

A *shell building* permit includes no mechanical, electrical, or plumbing within the *shell building* except for specific items identified in this code word. Every *shell building* project submittal package must comply with all applicable items listed on the commercial prerequisite checklist the same as any other new commercial building plan, and all of the following specific items:

1. The “*intended use and occupancy*” of every proposed *shell building* must be included on the permit application by the permit applicant.
2. The intended use, occupancy group, construction type, fire rating, automatic fire protection systems, and correct FCC and FPU codes shall be identified in the appropriate fields in all ILMS screens before plans are routed for review.
3. Additional notes shall be added to the 103-screen detailing the specific scope of work, the intended use and occupancy, the building construction type, fire rating, number of stories, additional permits required, the architect and structural engineer, and an itemized list of all required special inspections shall be identified with all notes coded to print on the permit and CC.
4. The submittal package must contain all structural building and foundation plans, sealed, signed, and dated by a Texas engineer. **NOTE:** All deferred submittal items shall be identified using a completed deferred submittal form that is signed and dated by all appropriate parties and included within the submittal package. (See Deferred Submittal Form CE-1086.)
5. Photocopies of fire-rated design data associated with fire-resistive assemblies must be included in the plan submittal package for all shell buildings proposing or requiring fire-resistance rated assemblies. Where sprinkler fire protection and/or *fire walls* are required to comply with allowable area for the intended use, those building elements must be included in the submitted plans. All proposed or required fire-rated assemblies must be keyed to the plans and the fire-resistance rated assembly design data. **NOTE:** No interior walls other than those previously identified.

**Continued...**



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<b>Shell Building Submittals, Cont.</b>					

6. Because a shell building is not occupied, the exit and exit access is not part of a shell building plan review. The means of egress discharge from the building to the right-of-way shall be sufficiently documented for code compliance on the detailed site plan. As with any partial permit applicants proceed at their own risk when utilizing phased permitting.
7. Based on the intended use and occupancy proposed, all *shell buildings* are subject to applicable site related code provisions including location on property (*fire separation distance, etc.*), Appendix D of the Houston Fire Code for fire apparatus access, and required access and maximum distance to fire hydrants.
8. All *shell buildings* are subject to all code requirements applicable to the building envelope and exterior lighting based on building size, specific use, and occupancy as specified in the Houston Energy Code and various associated guidelines. See Houston Commercial Energy Code.
9. No HVAC work is allowed under the *shell building* permit except for placement and anchored of roof mounted HVAC units. (Placement and anchor only.) No other mechanical work (HVAC) is allowed. No HVAC permit is issued for placement of roof top HVAC units. **NOTE:** Units may NOT be connected to the electrical or any ductwork.
10. Electrical work under the *shell building* permit shall be limited to the main house panel installation, exterior building and site lighting only, and temporary interior construction power and lighting.
11. Plumbing work under the *shell building* permit shall be limited to the sewer main lines and stub outs for each floor proposed, all of which shall be vented through the roof, and the waterline stub outs with valves only for each floor proposed, all of which shall be plugged and/or capped.
12. A complete dimensioned site plan documenting all required landscaping, paving, sidewalks, ROW driveway approaches, and drainage. Where sitework is previously approved under other authorized phased construction permits, a copy of the approved site work plan shall be provided in the *shell building* plans.
13. Where sprinkler system is a required component of the proposed *shell building* due to the intended use or occupancy, electrical and/or gas supply to the necessary heaters only, may be included with the *shell building* permit to protect sprinklers from freezing.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 31, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy/Procedure: Removal of Concrete Slab Foundations of Demolished Buildings</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>105.1 and 3303.8</b>				

All concrete slabs will be removed in conjunction with the demolition of the corresponding structure. Consideration for exception to removal shall be given in the following situations:

1. Slab is to be reused and a new structure placed upon it within 180 days.
2. An alternate use has been designated for the slab and approval of the Building Official has been given for the proposed use.

In situation number one, prior to the reconstruction the slab must be certified by a professional engineer that the slab is structurally sound and will support the new structure.

In situation number two, a request in writing must be submitted for the Building Official's approval for the alternative use, i.e., parking area, basketball court, etc.

Approved:

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 1, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Miscellaneous Definitions</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Houston Construction Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Definitions</b>				

The following interpretation provides miscellaneous definitions that are not currently defined in the Houston *Construction Code* but are commonly used during the permitting and inspections process.

**Shell Building** refers to a partially constructed building consisting of the foundation, the buildings thermal envelope (all exterior walls and roofs), and all required sitework designed to comply with all code requirements applicable to the intended use and occupancy.

**Maintenance** refers to the upkeep of any part of private property regulated by the Houston Construction Code, including but not limited to, structures, buildings, premise wiring, mechanical, plumbing, electrical systems, or equipment to the minimum code requirements based on the code of record when originally permitted, constructed, and/or installed.

**Suite** refers to a group of connected rooms used as a unit.

Approved:

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Byron D. King  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>October 30, 2017</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Specific Approval for Temporary Modular Building(s)</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>108 and 3103</b>				

This code interpretation establishes the plan review and permit procedure for installation of certain typical temporary modular buildings allowed by Section 108 and 3103 of the Houston *Building Code*. A proposed temporary modular building (excluding hazardous occupancies and occupancies producing or utilizing hazardous materials in processes) may be authorized for permit for a period of 179 days maximum without typically required platting and site plan review, and wastewater capacity based on plan submittals documenting compliance with all applicable code provisions and the following specific conditions:

- The proposed temporary building is a Texas Industrialized Housing and Building (TIHB) approved for use within the Houston wind speed zone. Modular (TIHB) structures shall be designed and manufactured based on the Houston *Building Code* or ASCE-7 for the minimum wind speed and Risk Category that is subject to the specific occupancy and building location.
- Properties located in a floodplain or in a special flood hazard area may require additional flood permits and construction provisions. Reference Chapter 19 of the Code of Ordinances and appropriate flood maps.
- Stormwater may not flow across the property line to adjacent properties.
- The temporary structure shall be located on the property in compliance with the applicable provisions of Section 705 and Table 705.5 of the Houston *Building Code* for the proposed construction type and occupancy group. A scalable site plan documenting appropriate fire-separation distance to property lines and sufficient parking shall be provided for the proposed building size and use.
- Electrical shall be provided by a temporary saw pole installed by a licensed electrical contractor or by connection to a properly permitted standby power generator complying with Chapter 27 of the Houston *Building Code* and the Houston *Electrical Code*, or by authorized connection to an existing panel of an adjacent building on the same lot where the panel is adequate to handle the additional electrical load.
- Water shall be provided by connection to an existing water supply or by a potable water holding tank. Sanitary services shall be provided by connection to an existing sanitary service or holding tank. Where water or sewer holding tanks are provided, a copy of the service contract for water resupply and holding tank cleaning shall be provided with the plans when submitting to Commercial Plan Review for permit.

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<b>Specific Approval for Temporary Modular Building(s), Cont.</b>					

- Appropriate (TIHB) plans, site plan, utility connection details and Texas engineer sealed plans for egress landing, steps, ramps, guards, and handrails as applicable shall be submitted for Plan Review.
- Permits shall be obtained, inspected, and final for electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and structural work.

**NOTE:** Plan approval is in no way an exemption or modification to any applicable provisions of the Houston Construction Code or Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS).

**Approved permits are subject to an aggregate time of 179 days maximum within a 12-month period. Except for converting an existing properly permitted temporary building to a permanent building, the temporary structure must be removed before any other projects at this address receive a permit.**

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



City of Houston  
Building Code Enforcement  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>May 7, 2020</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Plumbing Fixture Count Interpretation</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>[P] 2902.1 and [P] 2902.3</b>				

The purpose of this code word is to clarify the application of two code provisions of Chapter 29 of the Houston *Building Code* as they relate to the availability and fixture count of public toilet facilities.

**[P] 2902.1 Minimum number of fixtures.** *Plumbing fixtures shall be provided in the minimum number as shown in Table 2902.1 based on the actual use of the building or space. Uses not shown in Table 2902.1 shall be considered individually by the code official. The number of occupants shall be determined by this code.*

**[P] 2902.3 Employee and public toilet facilities.** *For structures and tenant spaces intended for public utilization, customers, patrons and visitors shall be provided with public toilet facilities. The number of plumbing fixtures located within the required toilet facilities shall be provided in accordance with Section 2902 for all users. Employee toilet facilities shall be either separate or combined employee and public toilet facilities.*

**Exception:** *Public toilet facilities shall not be required in:*

- 1. Open or enclosed parking parages where there are no parking attendants.*
- 2. Structures and tenant spaces intended for quick transactions—including takeout, pickup, and drop-off—having a public access area less than or equal to 300 square feet (28 m<sup>2</sup>).*

This section specifically indicates that customers, patrons and visitors shall be provided public toilet facilities for all structures and lease spaces intended to be utilized by the public including, but not limited to, any persons who may be engaged in the activities of the establishment. Public establishments include but are not limited to any facility utilized by the public including restaurants, nightclubs, theaters, offices, retail shops, stadiums, libraries, churches, and includes educational and daycare facilities. Persons engaged in the activities of the establishment include employees, as well as any other usual occupants, or visitors that may have business at the facility even for brief meetings or assemblies.

As indicated in the published commentary for this section, the total occupant load of the facility shall be used to determine the minimum number of plumbing fixtures required for the public toilet facilities. Private toilet facilities such as those located within individual classrooms or private offices that are not readily available and provide direct access from the public or common areas shall not count towards the minimum plumbing fixtures required for the public toilet facilities. Additionally, restricted purpose toilet fixtures such as, but not limited to, reduced size or height plumbing fixtures (such as those provided for children) shall not contribute to the minimum public plumbing fixture count required for the total occupant load served.

For Plan Review purposes, an itemized breakdown of the fixtures and the occupancies they serve shall be provided in order to determine and differentiate private/restricted purpose toilet fixtures from public toilet fixtures intended to serve the public.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



City of Houston  
Building Code Enforcement  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>July 6, 2021</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Administrative Processes for Alterations, Remodels and Demolitions</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building, Residential, and Existing Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>104.1 (IBC) and R104.1 (IRC)</b>				

This code word defines terms related to existing building alterations that are used for administrative processes associated with plan review and permitting. The intent is to clarify when an alteration is minor and when it becomes a substantial alteration requiring plan review and inspection as new construction. This clarification provides definitive metrics for customers and city employees, and will help everyone to understand the expectations associated with the different scopes of work.

Alterations resulting in <50% of the building area are considered a minor alteration and building alterations of ≥50% of the building area are considered substantial alterations. For buildings demolished or deconstructed ≥50% of the building area result in a *building demolition* as defined below and constitute a review as new construction.

The requirements established in this code word are intended for all structures. However, these definitions have no impact on how the Flood department enforces its own 50% substantial damage or improvement rule based on the construction cost. In the event a conflict occurs between the four definitions below, the most restrictive shall apply.

- A. Minor remodel or alteration
- B. Substantial remodel or alteration
- C. New building
- D. Building demolition

- A. **Minor remodel or alteration** means a remodel or alteration of an existing building where the total area of the rooms being altered is less than 50% of the total building area of the existing building as defined by the *Building Code*, prior to any City approved modifications. See “*area, building*” definition in the *Building Code*. Minor remodels or alterations are classified as Level 1 and/or Level 2 alterations per the *Existing Building Code*.
- B. **Substantial remodel or alteration** means a remodel or alteration to an existing building where the total aggregate square footage of the rooms being altered is equal to or greater than 50% of the total building area of the existing building as defined by the *Building Code*, prior to any City approved changes. See “*area, building*” definition in the *Building Code*. Substantial remodels or alterations are classified as Level 3 alterations per the *Existing Building Code*.
- C. **New building** means any new, rebuilt building resulting from a building demolition or deconstruction project, or a relocated building from a different address that is used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or occupancy. See “*building*” definition in the *Building Code*.

Continued...



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<b>Administrative Processes for Alteration/Remodel/Demo, Cont.</b>					

D. **Building demolition** means the demolition, removal, or disassembly of any portion of the structure that meets or exceeds the “total calculated demolition factor” of **1.50**. Please fill out the cells provided below to determine the “total calculated demolition factor”.

AREA	EXISTING	REMOVED	CALCULATED DEMOLITION FACTOR
ROOF AREA (SQ.FT.)			
INTERIOR AREA (SQ.FT.)			
EXTERIOR WALL LENGTH (FT)			
<b>TOTAL CALCULATED DEMOLITION FACTOR</b>			

Demolition, removal, or disassembly that exceeds the “total calculated demolition factor” of **1.50** at any time during an alteration project constitutes a building demolition and requires plan review and inspection as new construction.

Proposed construction on an existing foundation of project types identified in items C and D above, relocated buildings, and new construction on new foundations will be reviewed as a new structure or building. No vertical building additions or floor additions shall be approved on existing foundations without a structural analysis of the existing foundation and supporting framing that is sealed, signed, and dated by a Texas registered professional engineer indicating compliance with all appropriate provisions of the Houston *Construction Code* for the occupancy, type of construction, and number of stories proposed.

Approved:   
 Byron D. King  
 Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
**Building Code Enforcement**  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>December 9, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Relocated/Moved Building(s) Policy &amp; Requirements</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>IEBC, IRC, IBC, UPC, UMC, NEC</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>104.1 (IBC) and Chapter 14 (IEBC)</b>				

This code word interpretation is intended to clarify the requirements applicable to all buildings being relocated and/or moved in the City of Houston. *Chapter 10, Article III* of the *Code of Ordinances* specifically requires buildings moved in the city limits of Houston to be brought into compliance with all applicable development and *Construction Code* requirements for the designated occupancy within 150 calendar days after the building is moved onto a property.

This code word identifies the policy and applicable provisions of the *Construction Code* and *Code of Ordinances* when a building is relocated and/or moved in the City of Houston. All of the following requirements shall be enforced when a building is relocated and/or moved from outside the city limits to within the city limits of Houston, or when existing permitted structures within the city limits are relocated from one location to another within the city limits:

1. The building shall be abated of any hazardous construction materials as required by local, state, and federal law.
2. The site and foundation shall be treated as new development and shall be in accordance with the Houston *Construction Code* and applicable *City Code of Ordinances*.
3. The building shall comply with the *Existing Building Code* requirements of *Chapter 14* for "Relocated or Moved Buildings" and the appropriate referenced codes for the scope of work proposed.
4. The building shall meet the current wind speed design and risk category for that specific site, occupancy, and use in accordance with *Chapter 16* and *Section 1609.3* of the Houston *Building Code*, or *Section R301.2.1.1* of the Houston *Residential Code*, whichever is applicable in accordance with *Section 1402.3* of the *Existing Building Code*.
5. Both the Houston *Building Code* and Houston *Residential Code* includes minimum requirements for lighting and ventilation in all occupancies. These minimum requirements shall be met in all relocated or moved structures. Where Mechanical, Electrical and/or Plumbing (MEP) is required and/or provided in any moved or relocated structure it shall meet the minimum requirements of each applicable code for the specific requirements of Items 5, 6, and 7 below.
6. The building shall comply with the appropriate minimum requirements of the Houston *Energy Conservation Code* for both commercial and/or relocated buildings, respectively.
7. The electrical portions of a relocated and/or moved building shall comply with *Section 102.5* of the Houston Administrative Provisions to the *2023 National Electrical Code (NEC)*. Any required and/or proposed electrical alterations or repairs shall comply with the appropriate code provisions applicable to the scope of work.

**Continued...**



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<b>Relocated and/or Moved Buildings, Cont.</b>					

8. The plumbing portions of a relocated and/or moved building shall comply with *Section 102.2* and *102.7* of the Houston *Plumbing Code*. Any required and/or proposed plumbing alterations or repairs to any system or equipment shall comply with the appropriate code provisions applicable to the scope of work.
9. The mechanical portions of a relocated and/or moved building shall comply with *Section 102.7* of the Houston *Mechanical Code*. Any required and/or proposed mechanical alterations or repairs to any system or equipment shall comply with the appropriate code provisions applicable to the scope of work.

**NOTE:** Beginning January 1, 2023, the Department of Energy (DOE) Guidelines will no longer allow installation of an A/C system that does not meet the minimum SEER requirements listed in the 2023 Regional Standards for Split System Air Conditioners. A/C systems less than 45k Btu/h will require 15.0 SEER (or 14.3 SEER2), and A/C systems equal to and greater than 45k Btu/h will require 14.5 SEER (or 13.8 SEER2).

10. Where alterations or repairs are proposed the alterations shall comply with the appropriate provisions of the *Existing Building Code* and any applicable referenced codes for the scope of work proposed.

Any repair, alterations, or change of occupancy associated with a relocated and/or moved structure shall comply with the specific requirements of the *Existing Building Code* applicable to the occupancy, use, and scope of work being performed. Field-fabricated elements shall comply with the requirements of the of the Houston *Building Code* or the Houston *Residential Code*, as applicable.

**NOTE:** This Code Word is not intended for relocated or moved buildings constructed under the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) Industrialized Housing and Buildings (IHB) program.

Approved:   
Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



City of Houston  
Building Code Enforcement  
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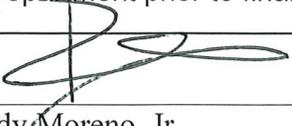
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>September 15, 2025</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Security Gates Within Interior Exit Stairway Enclosures</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Building Code and Fire Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Sections 1003 and 1010</b>				

This Code Word is intended to clarify the conditions under which security gates or doors may be installed at intermediate landings within interior exit stairway enclosures. The International Code Council (ICC), through Committee Interpretation (IBC Interpretation 38-21) and Staff Opinion (ICCTO-5527), has determined that such installations are not expressly prohibited by the *International Building Code*. These configurations may be considered acceptable when equipped with fail-safe, alarm-connected hardware and when the intermediate landing complies with Sections 1010.1.5 and 1011.6. In accordance with these ICC determinations, the *Building Official* and *Fire Code Official* may permit the installation of gates and/or doors at intermediate landings of interior exit stairways when **all** of the following conditions are met:

1. The building is equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system and a fire alarm system with emergency voice/alarm communication in accordance with the *Houston Construction Code*.
2. The gate/door shall:
  - a. Be of the swinging type,
  - b. Swing in the direction of egress travel, and;
  - c. Provide a minimum clear width not less than the required width of the stairway.
3. The gate/door shall be equipped with fail-safe hardware complying with Sections 1010.2.7, 1010.2.11, and 1010.2.12 of the *Houston Building Code*. Unlocking shall occur automatically upon any of the following conditions:
  - a. Loss of primary power.
  - b. Activation of the building's fire alarm or sprinkler system.
  - c. Activation of smoke detection within the stair enclosure and at the location of the gate/door.
  - d. Manual release from both the Fire Command Center and a keyed switch adjacent to the gate/door, consistent with Sections 403.5.3 and 403.5.3.1 of the *Building Code*.
4. Landing geometry on both sides of the gate/door shall comply with Sections 1010.1.5 and 1011.6 of the *Building Code* and shall remain free of obstructions at all times.
5. The gate/door assembly and any associated fencing shall be constructed of non-combustible materials and shall not reduce the required fire-resistance rating of the stair enclosure.
6. Permanent signage with high contrast, 1-inch-high letters stating "FIRE EXIT – DOORS UNLOCK DURING ALARM" shall be installed on both sides of the gate/door.
7. The design, wiring diagrams, and sequence of operations shall be included in the construction documents. Commissioning and acceptance testing shall be witnessed by both Building Code Enforcement and the Houston Fire Department prior to final approval.

Approved:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rudy Moreno, Jr.  
Interim Building Official



City of Houston  
Building Code Enforcement  
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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-R01</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 9, 2014</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Rooftop Applications Allowed Under the IRC</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R101.2 and R202</b>				

The scope of the Houston *Residential Code* is limited to three stories in height above grade plane. This interpretation is to clarify which rooftop structures are permitted in a three-story residence without being considered a fourth story as it applies to the *Residential Code*. The code definition for "Story" is:

**[RB] STORY.** That portion of a building included between the upper surface of a floor and the upper surface of the floor or roof next above.

The following minor rooftop structures will not be considered as a fourth story for townhouses, and one- and two-family residences:

- A residential rooftop stairway and stairway enclosure providing access to a roof including the a minimum size covered landing required to serve the stair. Covered areas beyond the stair enclosure that exceeds the minimum size landing required to serve the stair shall be considered a story.
- A mechanical room used exclusively to house mechanical equipment, with an equipment layout submitted in the plans.
- An open to the sky trellis, lattice, or similar shade structure.

This interpretation will apply to plans submitted for the first time with an original application date on or after May 15, 2014.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>February 14, 1989</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Residential Setback</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential and Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R102.1 (IRC) and 102.1 (IBC)</b>				

As established by Planning and Development policy, the location of townhouses and one- and two-family residences relative to a setback line shall be considered compliant where the outside face of the front exterior wall and foundation is located behind the setback line. Projections beyond the exterior wall such as eaves, gutter overhangs, bay windows, and other limited architectural projections into the setback area are acceptable unless specifically disqualified by the Planning Department.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
**Building Code Enforcement**  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 24, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Single-Family Dwelling, Building Permit Fee Configuration</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R108.3 and Tables R108.3.1(1) &amp; R108.3.1(2)</b>				

The permit fee calculation method for all single-family residential dwelling construction was changed by ordinance #2021-1037 and became effective as of January 1, 2022. The fee calculations are now based on the combined total square footage of proposed new construction, repairs, and alterations.

The structural building permit fee for new single-family dwellings and existing building additions is based on the total aggregate area (square footage) of the new building, and new addition(s) based on the proposed "building area" as defined in the Houston *Building Code*.

The permit fee for residential remodel construction of existing buildings is based on the total aggregate area (square footage) of all interior rooms being altered plus the total aggregate area (square footage) of alterations or repairs associated with vertical exterior walls.

Projects proposing both addition(s) (new building area square footage), and alterations or repairs, requires the total aggregate areas of both the new addition(s) and the combined square footage of both alterations and repairs (remodel) for permit fee calculation.

**NOTE:** At the end of Section R108.3.1 of the Houston *Residential Code* are two notes added to the code that allows the structural building permit to be reduced by 50% to promote construction of new low-income housing, and remodel/repair upgrades of historical buildings and landmarks.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
**Building Code Enforcement**  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 16, 2014</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Residential Fire-Ratings and Location</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R302.1</b>				

The *Residential Code* requires fire rating for exterior wall construction and projections beyond the exterior wall when located less than 5 feet from the property line as specified by Section R302 and Table R302.1(1). This code word interpretation is intended to clarify the extent of fire resistance rated projection required for construction of exterior wall projections of various types.

- Less than 3 feet of a property line or lot line openings in the exterior wall and openings in exterior wall projections are prohibited. This includes attic soffit ventilation openings.
- Projections beyond the exterior wall are not allowed to extend to within 2 feet of a property line.
- Stairs are allowed within 5 feet of the property line provided the side of the stair parallel and closest to the property line is protected up to, and including, any required handrails or guardrails, whichever is higher, with a one hour rating.
- Minor shade structures that are not accessory to a residence and not exceeding 120 square feet that do not have a solid roof, and do not serve as part of a means of egress path, may be constructed with one hour fire-resistance rated protection for all columns and beams located less than 5 feet to the property line.
- Residential accessory structures shall comply with the provisions of Section R302.1.

Where any proposed construction is located less than 3 feet to a property line a maintenance agreement with the adjacent property owner shall be included with the submitted plans for review and approval.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-R05</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>October 7, 2013</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Continuity of Fire-Resistance-Rated Walls for Residences</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R302.1, R302.2, and R302.3</b>				

This code word interpretation is intended to provide consistency to the fire-resistance rating requirements of single-family, townhouse, and duplex construction.

Section R302.1 requires a fire-resistance rating for the full height of the exterior walls. Only foundation vents installed in accordance with Exception #5 of R302.1 are permitted.

Section R302.2.3 requires continuity of the fire-resistance rated wall separating townhouses.

Section R302.3 requires a fire-resistance rated wall separating units in a two-family dwelling extend from the foundation to the roof sheathing. This section does not address separation walls elevated on piers with no enclosed space as the foundation, and it does not say the termination is from grade. If a crawl space runs horizontally across the two dwelling units, it could still provide a path for a fire to move from one unit to another as the fire seeks oxygen. Thus, the rated wall must run continuously through the crawl space. The use of any rated beams and piers in the crawl space as an equivalent to the proposed rated wall would be subject to the evaluation and approval of the Building Official.

Section R302.3.1 requires all construction supporting fire-resistance rated floor assemblies to have an equal or greater protection.

For clarification of the intent of the code, at any wall where a fire-resistance rating is required, this rating shall be continuous to the foundation below to the underside of the roof sheathing. This protection is based on the fire separation distance of the required protection per Table R302.1(1) or R302.1(2), as applicable, regardless of the separation distance of the supporting construction.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King", written over a horizontal line.

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
**Building Code Enforcement**  
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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-R06</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 13, 2009</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Residential Post-Tension Foundation</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R104.1 and R401.2</b>				

A foundation for a residential structure or addition that is designed as a post-tension building element shall be documented in submitted plans in accordance with the provisions of Section 107 and 1705.3 of the *Building Code*. The design shall include a sealed engineering design and qualified special inspection reports.

When post-tension foundations are used in multi-family residential structures such as townhomes, or when post-tension foundations cross property lines, the post-tension foundation will need to be an included item in the "common area agreement" when submitting for plan review.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
**Building Code Enforcement**  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>December 10, 2013</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Block and Base Foundations</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential and Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R403.1 &amp; R403.2 (IRC) and 1809.9 (IBC)</b>				

This policy is an acceptable alternate as per Section 104.11 of the *Residential Code* for existing buildings when performing maintenance or repair of existing block and base foundations. This alternative shall apply to conventional light-frame construction designed with girders and supported on blocks and bases in such a manner that the building can be easily leveled any time after the full load has been applied. For repair of existing block and base foundations, the following apply:

1. All loose material and vegetation must be removed to ensure solid bearing beneath bases.
2. End joints of girders shall occur over supports.
3. Minimum thickness of concrete bases shall be 4 inches.
4. The minimum width of the structure shall not be less than the overall height.
5. Girders shall not be placed further than the depth of the joist from the exterior wall.

For new and relocated buildings, as well as additions, block and base foundations shall be designed by a Texas Registered Professional Engineer to comply with the applicable code sections, or in accordance with Code Enforcement Standard Drawing No. 13-05-R.

This interpretation is applicable to all building plans submitted on or after March 1, 2014.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. King", written over a horizontal line.

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
**Building Code Enforcement**  
**CODE WORD 2021**

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 1, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Exterior Wall Openings</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Tables R302.1(1) &amp; R302.1(2)</b>				

For the purposes of regulating exterior wall opening limitations in accordance Tables R302.1(1) and R302.1(2) of the *Residential Code*, openings in exterior walls will be considered the openings located within the plane of the exterior wall envelope of each floor level.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-R09</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 1, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Clarification: Certificate of Compliance</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>R110.1</b>				

This interpretation is intended to clarify the requirements of Section R110.1 of the Houston amended *International Residential Code* that requires a Certificate of Compliance (CC) for Group R-3 one- and two-family dwellings, townhouses, and associated residential accessory buildings or structures before use or occupancy is allowed.

All new residential structures or additions, and changes in the existing use or occupancy classification of an existing building or structure, will be required to obtain a Certificate of Compliance before the structure can be used and/or occupied.

Alterations, remodels, and repairs of existing residential structures will not require a Certificate of Compliance unless specifically requested by the owner/applicant.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. King", written over a horizontal line.

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 1, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Clarification: Solar-Ready Appendix</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential and Energy Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Appendix AT (IRC) and Appendix RB (IECC)</b>				

This interpretation clarifies that one- and two-family dwellings, and multiple single-family dwellings (townhouses), that do not contain a minimum 600 square feet roof area oriented between 110 degrees and 270 degrees of true north are exempt from the provisions of Appendix AT.

This appendix does not require increased load capacities for the residential roofing systems. It does not require any specific physical orientation of any residential building. It does not require the redesign of plans or structural roof assemblies. The requirement is for a solar-ready zone to be identified on the plan sheet showing the roof layout for the future installation of solar electric and solar thermal systems where a south-facing roof plane contains a roof area of  $\geq 600$  square feet and oriented between 110 degrees and 270 degrees of true north.

The provisions of Appendix AT are intended for designers to identify areas on the roof of certain residential buildings, called a solar-ready zone. This solar-ready zone is for potential future installation of components of renewable energy systems such as photovoltaic solar panels. Planning ahead for possible future solar equipment starts with documenting necessary solar-ready zone information on the building plans prior to the code review of the permit process. This will save building departments and solar designers time and effort when installing future solar systems. If a homeowner wishes to install a solar energy system later, this documentation can save thousands of dollars in research, labor, installation, design, and integration of the solar system into the house.

This appendix also requires the builder to post specific information from the plans about the design of the home for use by the homeowner(s). The documentation of solar-ready zones, as well as the roof load (which is already provided in the plans due to Sections R106.1.1 and R301.1 of the *Residential Code*) will assist building departments as well as future contractors seeking to install renewable energy systems.

The provisions of Section AT103.1 (RB103.2) requires certain new detached one- and two-family dwellings, and multiple single-family dwelling (townhouse) structures to document compliance with the provisions for a solar-ready zone as described in U103.3 of the Houston residential code, where those dwelling structures meet both following conditions:

1. The dwelling contains a roof plane having not less than 600 square feet of roof area.
2. The roof area is oriented between 110 degrees and 270 degrees of true north.

In addition, there are two exceptions to Section AT103.1 (RB103.2) that exempt buildings from the requirements of AT103 where either of the following conditions exist:

1. The new residential building includes a permanently installed on-site renewable energy system.
2. A building with the required minimum size solar-ready zone is shaded for more than 70 percent of daylight hours annually.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 10, 2024</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Canopy Design and Review</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential and Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Sec. R302.1 &amp; Appendix AH (IRC) and Sec. 3105 (IBC)</b>				

This interpretation is intended to clarify code requirements for the design and review of canopies or porches accessory to dwelling units that are regulated by the Houston *Residential Code*.

Although the terms are not defined within the Houston *Residential Code*, a canopy or porch is considered a projection. Section R201.3 states that terms that are not defined in the International Residential Code take on the meanings as defined in other I-codes. As defined in Section 202 of the International Building Code, a canopy that is attached to the exterior wall of a building shall be considered a projection. Therefore, a canopy or porch must comply with the applicable table – either Table R302.1(1) or Table R302.1(2) – based on the fire separation distance of the exterior wall to which the projection is attached.

As indicated in Table R302.1(1), projections are not allowed within 2 feet of the property line. Projections which are at least 2 feet but less than 5 feet from the lot line shall either have a 1-hour fire-resistance rating on the underside of the projection, or be constructed of heavy timber or fire-retardant-treated wood. As such, if a canopy or porch is within 5 feet of the property line, it would be considered a projection and would be required to have a 1-hour fire resistance rating on the underside of the projection or be constructed of heavy timber or fire retardant-treated wood.

Canopies and porches shall be designed in accordance with Appendix AH of the Houston *Residential Code* and Section 3105 of the Houston *Building Code*.

### DEFINITIONS

**CANOPY.** A permanent structure or architectural projection of rigid construction over which a covering is attached that provides weather protection, identity or decoration. A canopy is permitted to be structurally independent or supported by attachment to a building on one or more sides. (*IBC, Section 202*)

**PATIO COVER.** A structure with open or glazed walls that is used for recreational, outdoor living purposes associated with a dwelling unit. (*IRC, Appendix AH*)

Approved:

Rudy Moreno, Jr.  
Interim Building Official



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Building Code Enforcement  
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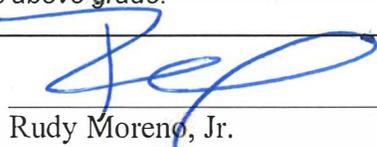
<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021 – R12</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 15, 2025</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Impact Protection for Residential ESS</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Section R104.1 and R328.8</b>				

This interpretation is intended to clarify provisions of the Houston *Residential Code* that require vehicle impact protection for Energy Storage Systems (ESS). In accordance with Section R328.8, ESS installed in locations subject to vehicle damage shall be protected by *approved* barriers. However, no further prescriptive requirements are given for the design or construction of required impact barriers and compliance is left to the determination of the Building Official as to whether the impact protection provided is acceptable and is in compliance with the code.

In the 2024 *International Residential Code*, an update to the impact protection requirements was made that provides more details on the types of barriers allowed for ESS impact protection, and gives prescriptive requirements for barrier size, anchorage, etc. Based on these updates to the 2024 *International Residential Code*, and to provide clarity regarding acceptable types of ESS impact protection, the following impact barriers based on Section R330.8.3 of the 2024 *International Residential Code* are considered acceptable to the Building Official and comply with the intent of Section R328.8 of the Houston *Residential Code*.

1. *Bollards constructed in accordance with one of the following:*
  - 1.1. *Minimum 48 inches in length by 3 inches in diameter Schedule 80 steel pipe embedded in a concrete pier not less than 12 inches deep and 6 inches in diameter, with not less than 36 inches of pipe exposed, filled with concrete and spaced at a maximum interval of 5 feet. Each bollard shall be located not less than 6 inches from an ESS.*
  - 1.2. *Minimum 36 in height by 3 inches in diameter Schedule 80 steel pipe fully welded to a steel plate not less than 8 inches in length by ¼ inch in thickness and bolted to a concrete floor by means of 4½-inch concrete anchors imbedded not less than 3 inches. Spacing shall be not greater than 60 inches, and each bollard shall be located not less than 6 inches from the ESS.*
  - 1.3. *Premanufactured steel pipe bollards filled with concrete and anchored in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions, with spacing not greater than 60 inches. Each bollard shall be located not less than 6 inches from the ESS.*
2. *Wheel barriers constructed in accordance with one of the following:*
  - 2.1. *Concrete or polymer, 4 inches in height by 5 inches in width by 70 inches in length, anchored to the concrete floor not less than every 36 inches and located not less than 54 inches from the ESS. Concrete anchors not less than 3½ inches in diameter with 3-inch embedment per barrier shall be used. Spacing between barriers shall be not greater than 36 inches.*
  - 2.2. *Premanufactured wheel barriers shall be anchored in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions.*
3. *An approved method designed to resist an impact of 2,000 pounds per square foot in the direction of travel at 24 inches above grade.*

Approved:

  
Rudy Moreno, Jr.  
Interim Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>May 28, 2025</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ESS in Residential Garages, Locations Requiring Impact Protection</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Section R104.1 and R328.8</b>				

This interpretation is intended to clarify provisions of the Houston *Residential Code* that require vehicle impact protection for Energy Storage Systems (ESS). In accordance with Section R328.8, ESS installed in *locations subject to vehicle damage* shall be protected by approved barriers. However, no further prescriptive details are given about what locations within a residential garage may be susceptible to impact from a vehicle and therefore subject to impact barrier protection.

The 2024 *International Residential Code* (IRC) includes an update to the impact protection requirements to provide prescriptive details on the specific locations in residential garages in which impact protection is required due to the installation of ESS equipment. In consideration of these clarifying updates, the following provisions based on Section R330.8.1 of the 2024 *IRC* are considered applicable to residential ESS installations located within a garage for determining when impact protection is required:

*Where ESS is installed in the “normal driving path” of vehicle travel within a garage, impact protect shall be provided.*

*The normal driving path is a space between the garage vehicle opening and the interior face of the back wall to a height of 48 inches above the finished floor. The width of the normal driving path shall be equal to the width of the garage door opening.*

*Impact protection shall be provided for an ESS installed at either of the following locations:*

- 1. On the interior face of the back wall and located within 36 inches to the left or to the right of the normal driving path.*
- 2. On the interior face of a side wall and located within 24 inches from the back wall and 36 inches of the normal driving path.*

*Where the clear height of the vehicle garage opening is 7 feet 6 inches or less, ESS installed not less than 36 inches above finished floor are not subject to vehicle impact protection.*

**NOTE:** The figure included below from the 2024 *IRC* provides further clarification and illustrated details on locations in residential garages where impact protection is required for ESS equipment.

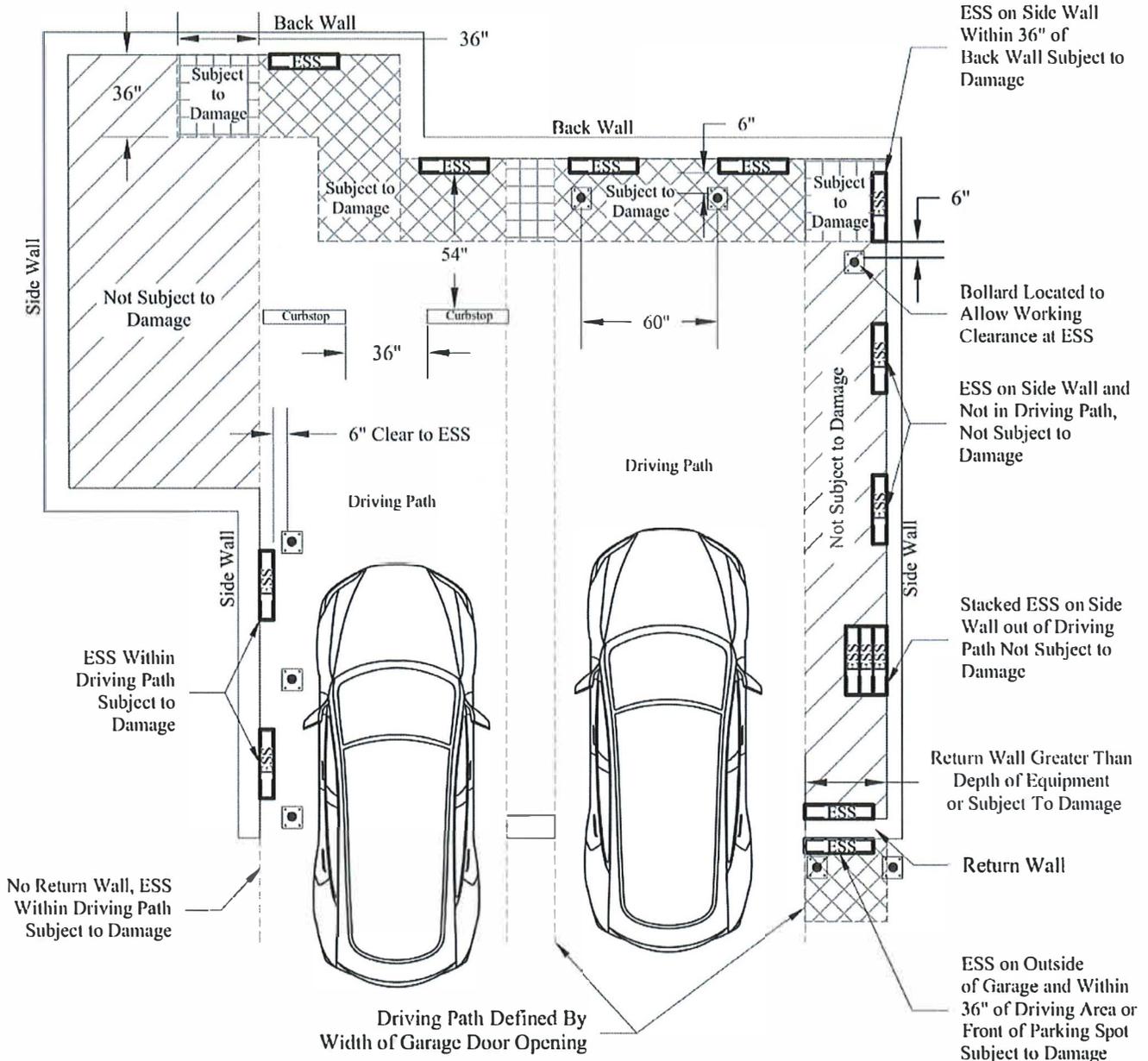
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<b>ESS in Residential Garages, Cont.</b>					



**ESS VEHICLE IMPACT PROTECTION**  
*Figure R330.8.1 — 2024 International Residential Code*

Approved:   
Rudy Moreno, Jr.  
Interim Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>September 15, 2025</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Noise-Attenuating Fenestration; Testing Per ASTM E1332</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Residential and Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Appendix AU (IRC) and Appendix N (IBC)</b>				

The purpose of this Code Word is to clarify the correct field-testing standard for demonstrating compliance with Appendix AU of the Houston *Residential Code* and Appendix N of the Houston *Building Code* for projects located within *airport land use tiers* established under Article VI, Chapter 9 of the *City Code*.

### **BACKGROUND**

Appendix AU (IRC) and Appendix N (IBC) of the Houston *Construction Code* require windows and doors have a minimum STC 40 rating when tested in accordance with ASTM E90 *or* have a NNIC rating of not less than 45 when field tested in accordance with ASTM E336. The ASTM E336 standard was conceived for interior airborne-noise isolation of speech frequencies and does *not* incorporate the time-weighted, low-frequency bias typical of aircraft noise addressed by the DNL metric in Chapter 9.

The more appropriate field-testing standard is ASTM E1332, which classifies and measures Outdoor-Indoor Transmission Class (OITC) or Apparent Outdoor-Indoor Transmission Class (AOITC) using noise spectra that reflect real-world environmental conditions. Analytical studies and field correlations indicate that an AOITC rating of not less than 32 provides an interior attenuation equivalent to STC 40 rated construction and achieves the minimum 45 dBA interior sound levels typical for exterior aircraft-noise environments.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

ASTM E336 (NNIC Rating) shall no longer be accepted for fenestration field-testing within airport land use tiers, and instead, ASTM E1332 (2022 edition) employing the reference spectrum defined in ASTM E1332 shall be the approved field-testing method moving forward. Tested façades must demonstrate an AOITC  $\geq$  32, which is deemed sufficient to achieve an interior design sound level of  $\leq$  45 dBA within habitable spaces as required by Chapter 9 of the *City Code*. Procedures for field testing shall include the following:

1. *Tests shall be performed and compute AOITC per ASTM E1332 and façade excitation and measurement details shall follow ASTM E966 as referenced by ASTM E1332.*
2. *Test location and sample size shall include:*
  - a. *A minimum of one representative test per façade orientation or distinct construction type.*
  - b. *Tests shall be performed after installation and prior to occupancy, with all penetrations sealed and in-service glazing.*
3. *Documentation shall include:*
  - a. *A completed ASTM E1332 report showing associated data, the calculated AOITC, the spectrum used, and testing agency accreditation.*
  - b. *Annotated floor plan sheets shall be provided identifying test positions.*
  - c. *Instrumentation calibration certificates (current) and tester qualifications.*
4. *Fenestrations shall be permanently labeled with their certified AOITC rating.*

Upon completion of field testing, structural building inspectors will verify on-site labeling and review associated test reports for AOITC compliance.

Approved:

  
Rudy Moreno, Jr.  
Interim Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>October 15, 1996</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Utility Release Option</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>104 (UMC)</b>				

**PURPOSE:** Utility release options allow such items as dishwashers, ranges, condensing units, charcoal cooktops and other such fixtures and appliances to be absent from the completed residence during the final inspection while providing approval for the release of utility connections.

**PERMIT:** A permit for each craft involved in a particular appliance or fixture is required in order to facilitate a Utility Release Option. Permits must be purchased at the same time the regular permit is obtained or at any point during construction of the house. This permit is a separate distinct project number from the original and should indicate "for appliances not set. REF: \_\_\_\_\_" (original project number)

**PROCEDURE**

**Mechanical**

Air conditioning contractors who will complete the installation of the environmental air conditioning system less the condensing unit, and/or complete the installation of the air-conditioning system less the kitchen ventilation device, must follow the provisions of Code Word 2021-M02.

**Important Note:**

Construction superintendents, builders, developers or others in control of construction projects must direct their MEP subcontractors to contact the Building Inspection Division, City of Houston, for instructions and assistance in establishing the appropriate utility release permits. Only licensed contractors may obtain the necessary permits.

**Mechanical Inspections Section ..... 832-394-8850**

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 21, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Utility Inspection Procedure</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical and Residential Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>105 (UMC) and R109 (IRC)</b>				

The following procedure applies only to dwellings of occupancy classification Group R-3.

A mechanical contractor may obtain a "utility release inspection" up to 10 days prior to installing a condensing unit and/or kitchen ventilator provided the following conditions are met:

1. A temporary inspection fee has been paid in accordance with Section 118.3.2 of the *Building Code*. Such fee shall be paid by obtaining a separate HVAC permit in addition to the regular installation permit. The utility permit must be specified at the time of application as an "AY" permit type.
2. All other components of the HVAC system are complete and installed in accordance with all applicable code requirements.
3. **Kitchen Ventilation:**
  - a. Ductwork serving future ventilation equipment, whether such ductwork is installed underground, within kitchen cabinetwork or elsewhere, must be installed prior to the utility inspection, be in accordance with code and prepared to accept the proposed ventilation equipment.
  - b. Electrical wiring serving future kitchen ventilation equipment shall be installed prior to the utility inspection, be in accordance with code and prepared to accept the proposed ventilation equipment.
4. **Air-Conditioning Condensing Unit:**
  - a. Refrigeration piping, pipe insulation and control wiring serving future condensing unit(s) shall be installed to the point of connection to the proposed condensing unit, be in accordance with the code and prepared to accept the condensing unit(s).
  - b. Electrical wiring serving a future condensing unit(s) shall be installed prior to the utility inspection, be in accordance with code and prepared to accept the proposed condensing unit(s).
5. **Final Inspection:**
  - a. Upon installation of the ventilation or condensing unit, the mechanical contractor (permittee) shall notify the Mechanical Section in a manner established and consistent with the scheduling of any other inspection and shall request a final utility inspection. The mechanical contractor shall make all necessary preparations with builders, homeowners, etc., to facilitate the inspector's access to the property at the time of inspection.

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<b>Utility Inspection Procedure, Cont.</b>					

- b. Such utility inspection shall be secured within ten (10) working days of the date of installation of either the proposed ventilation equipment or proposed condensing unit.

**6. Final Inspection:**

- a. Upon installation of the ventilation or condensing unit, the mechanical contractor (permittee) shall notify the Mechanical Section in a manner established and consistent with the scheduling of any other inspection and shall request a final utility inspection. The mechanical contractor shall make all necessary preparations with builders, homeowners, etc., to facilitate the inspector's access to the property at the time of inspection.
- b. Such utility inspection shall be secured within ten (10) working days of the date of installation of either the proposed ventilation equipment or proposed condensing unit.

**7. Non-Conformance Sanctions:**

- a. Mechanical contractors (permittee), upon failure to secure final inspection as indicated in item 5 above, will be subject to sanctions including but not limited to the following:
  - i. The contractor's ability to obtain permits will be suspended until compliance is secured.
  - ii. A Municipal Court citation may be issued pursuant to Section 106.3 of the *Mechanical Code*.
  - iii. Additional use of the Utility Inspection procedure will be suspended.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 3, 1988</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Natural Gas Piping in Air Plenums/Ducts</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>303</b>				

Fuel gas piping may be installed in accessible above-ceiling spaces used as a return air plenum provided no valves or pipe unions are located in such spaces.

Fuel gas piping shall not be run through a circulating air duct, ventilating duct, chimney, or gas vent.

**CROSS REFERENCE:** NFPA 42, Houston *Plumbing Code* Section 1210.3.4.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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THE HOUSTON ADOPTED CODES,  
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2021 IECC and ASHRAE 90.1-2019, 2021 ISPSC, & 2023 NEC  
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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-M04</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>March 11, 1994</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Condensate Removal</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical and Residential Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>310 (UMC) and M1411.3 (IRC)</b>				

**R-3 Occupancies**

Air conditioning units installed in closets of R-3 residential buildings may discharge condensate into a funnel drain without a trap primer, provided that: the trap is above the floor, the funnel is above the return platform (outside the plenum) and is accessible when the closet door is open.

**All other occupancies**

In any occupancy, when a cooling coil or cooling unit is located in an area where the required secondary condensate drainpipe cannot be routed to a point which can readily be observed, the secondary drain pan or standing overflow outlet may be connected to the main drain line downstream of the primary drain pan provided the following requirements are met:

1. A float-switch designed to shut off the cooling unit is installed in the primary drain pan.
2. Appropriate fittings for the condensate piping in use are employed to make the secondary to primary pipe connection.
3. Adequate pipe insulation is installed on and around the secondary to primary pipe connection.

Condensate drains shall not connect to the tailpiece of a kitchen sink or to any such fixture serving a food preparation area, nor shall secondary drains be stubbed-out over any such fixture in a food preparation area.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>February 4, 1994</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Fire and Radiation Dampers in Existing Fire-Rated Ceiling Assemblies</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>607</b>				

Existing fire or radiation dampers may remain in existing fire-rated ceiling assemblies provided such fire or radiation dampers are not removed and reinstalled or altered. Additionally, such fire or radiation dampers must exist in a condition acceptable to code regulations in effect at the time of their original installation.

Existing fire or radiation dampers in existing ceiling assemblies may be relocated within the ceiling assembly provided such relocation does not require the fire or radiation damper assembly to be disconnected from its existing connecting air duct. Additional ducts shall not be added to facilitate relocation of the fire or radiation damper assembly.

New openings in the ceiling assembly shall be protected in accordance with Section 607 of the Houston *Mechanical Code* and meet UL assembly design number requirements.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-M06</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 11, 1994</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Listed Type 1 Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>507 and 508</b>				

Exhaust hoods tested in accordance with UL 710 Standard, listed and labeled by an approved testing agency, are acceptable for use with commercial cooking equipment if installed in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and terms of their listing.

Ancillary components of the exhaust hood must comply with the terms of listing. Where listing conditions or manufacturer's instructions do not address a specific item, the provisions of Sections 507 and 508 of the Houston *Mechanical Code* shall govern that item.

The components and configuration of each such system incorporating a listed hood is subject to the review and approval of the Building Official prior to its installation. Plans shall be submitted for review in accordance with Section 104.3 of the Houston *Mechanical Code*.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 29, 1987</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Combustion Air</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical and Residential Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>701.5 &amp; 701.6.2 (UMC) and G2407.6.2 (IRC)</b>				

As an alternate to the requirements of one half of the required combustion air opening being located within the lower 12 inches, all combustion air openings in an enclosure may be located within the upper 12 inches of the enclosure, provided there is an unobstructed area equal to twice the required opening area extending to the firebox.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>February 15, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Attic Access to Gas Fired Furnaces</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical and Residential Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>904.1 (UMC) and G2406.2 (IRC)</b>				

An attic access opening to a warm-air furnace located in a ventilated attic may be placed in the ceiling of a bedroom.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston**  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 10, 1987</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: State Class "B" Contractor License Limitations</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Mechanical and Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>111.5 (UMC) and 118.3 (IBC)</b>				

State Class "B" contractor licenses limitations related to tonnage, assigned by code, is considered to limit the licensee to repair and installation of equipment that is rated at not more than 25 tons.

This shall not limit a Class "B" contractor from installation or repair of air conditioning systems serving a building which contains more than 25 tons of mechanical refrigeration provided that no single system is greater than 25 tons, and that no single permit is greater than 25 tons.

Subsequently, multiple permits may be purchased for a single address or building to form an aggregate of the total tonnage in multiples of 25 tons or less.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>October 15, 1996</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Utility Release Option</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>105</b>				

**PURPOSE:** Utility release options allow such items as dishwashers, ranges, condensing units, charcoal cooktops and other such fixtures and appliances to be absent from the completed residence during the final inspection while providing approval for the release of utility connections.

**PERMIT:** A permit for each craft involved in a particular appliance or fixture is required in order to facilitate a Utility Release Option. Permits must be purchased at the same time the regular permit is obtained or at any point during construction of the house. This permit is a separate distinct project number from the original and should indicate “for appliances not set. REF: \_\_\_\_\_” (original project number).

**PROCEDURE**

**Plumbing**

A “temporary gas permit” must be obtained by the licensed plumber using the project number of the primary construction project. Contractors shall schedule a final inspection as usual. The existence of a temporary gas permit will indicate to the inspector that certain plumbing items will be absent. At the time the inspection is called into the Plumbing Section, the contractor shall clearly indicate that there is a temporary gas permit and that certain plumbing items will be absent at the time of the final inspection. All plumbing other than the specific item(s) to remain absent shall be complete and in compliance with the code. Upon approval by the inspector, the temporary gas permit will allow the gas utility company to install the gas meter.

The primary project will not be fully finalized until the absent appliances or fixtures are installed and inspected by the plumbing inspector. The primary project will remain active for a period of one-hundred eighty (180) days. During that period, it is expected that the absent equipment or fixture will be installed and inspected.

The plumbing contractor must remain vigilant and secure inspection on the primary permit as soon as the absent plumbing items are completed.

**Important Note:**

Construction superintendents, builders, developers or others in control of construction projects must direct their MEP subcontractors to contact the Building Inspection Division, City of Houston, for instructions and assistance in establishing the appropriate utility release permits. Only licensed contractors may obtain the necessary permits.

**Plumbing Inspections Section ..... 832-394-8870**

<p>Approved: </p> <p>Byron D. King Houston Building Official</p>
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>August 13, 2013</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Water Pressure Testing</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing and Residential Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>608.1 (UPC) and P2903.3 (IRC)</b>				

The requirements for minimum water pressure are described differently in the International Residential Code and the Uniform Plumbing Code although they both set the minimum water supply pressure required for a building. Section P2903.3 of the *Residential Code* requires a static pressure of 40 psi at the building entrance while Section 608.1 of the *Plumbing Code* requires a residual pressure of 15 psi after accounting for pressure losses. They are considered equivalent and either may be accepted for a new single-family residence.

New single-family homes will be tested for both the static and residual pressures and must comply with at least one of these standards. A water pressure test of both static and residual shall be performed at the rough piping inspection, if the permanent water supply is available and connected, or at final inspection if the water supply was not available at the rough inspection. If the pressure is not in compliance with at least one of these test standards for either static or residual pressure, the developer/applicant will be required to modify the system to meet the standard, which in some cases may require that a tank and pump be installed.

Approved:   
Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>February 10, 2015</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Building Sanitary Sewer Piping (Materials)</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>701.2 and 715.1</b>				

This interpretation is to clarify that the use of SDR-26 building sanitary sewer pipe is an acceptable equivalent material to the code specified SDR-35 sanitary sewer pipe identified in Sections 701.2 and 715.1 of the Houston *Plumbing Code* for plastic sewer pipe sizes 8-inch and larger.

The material specifications identify that the outside diameter remains the same for both materials at nominal 15.300-inch. The nominal inside diameter of the pipe is reduced slightly from 7.920-inch for 8-inch SDR-35, to 7.754-inch for the same size SDR-26 pipe.

Additional differences noted include the color of the material as well as the requirement for use of fittings specifically designed for SDR 26 pipe. SDR-35 and SDR-26 pipe and fittings are not interchangeable. Both SDR-35 and SDR-26 material and fittings are color coordinated for proper application, installation and inspection. In areas subject to truck and automobile traffic, the SDR-26 material is slightly thicker providing a beneficial increase in strength.

Although the proposed SDR 26 material is not specifically identified in Section 701.2 and 715.1 of the Houston *Plumbing Code*, where SDR-35 is specified for pipe sizes 8-inch or larger, there is no significant difference in the raw material used, the installation, or the required test standards associated with manufacture of the two products.

SDR 26 provides an increase in strength while the material and method is, for the purpose intended, equivalent to the minimum prescribed in this code in quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability and safety.

The use of SDR-26 for pipe sizes 8-inches and larger is approved where compliance with the manufacturer's installation instructions is strictly followed.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>November 1, 1993</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Floor Drains and Indirect Waste Receptors in Walk-In Coolers and Freezers</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code and City Code of Ordinances</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>801.3.2 (UPC) and Sec. 20-21.17 (Code of Ordinances)</b>				

Section 801.3.2 allows floor drains and indirect waste receptors in walk-in coolers and freezers to be connected to a separate drain line discharging to an outside receptor.

However, the Code of Ordinances Sec. 20-21.17 prohibits the direct connection of any floor drain or indirect waste receptor in walk-in coolers and freezers.

To maintain compatibility with the Health Department requirements, all floor drains and indirect waste receptors in walk-in coolers and freezers shall be indirectly connected to the sanitary sewer system.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 4, 1996</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Grease Interceptors</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1014 and Table 1014.3.6</b>				

Grease interceptors may be installed in series for one establishment provided the capacity of the first interceptor is not less than 1000 gallons and the total of all the interceptors is equal or greater than the capacity required.

Approved:

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>April 16, 1987</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Grease Traps</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1014.1</b>				

The grease trap requirements of Section 1014.1 shall not apply to day-care facilities, churches, employee lunchrooms, and similar occupancies utilizing *domestic* type cooking equipment.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>September 20, 2012</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Community Grease Interceptor Requirements</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1014.3.4.2</b>				

This interpretation applies to grease interceptors with multiple waste-streams in multi-tenant buildings such as food courts in malls, commercial strip developments, or mid- and high-rise buildings with food service tenants that have space limitations that prevent locating the grease interceptors at each business. Community grease interceptor systems are unique in that maintenance engineers are employed onsite, or available on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, the Community Grease Interceptor system must comply with all portions of the Houston *Plumbing Code*. These installations feature compact designs with onsite building management and maintenance capabilities that can specifically address interceptor related issues.

While a separate grease interceptor is required for each individual fat, oil or grease (FOG) producing business specified facilities providing documentation from the building owner or building management, may utilize a community grease interceptor system for multiple tenant connections, subject to the following conditions.

**Community Grease Interceptor Requirements:**

1. The building owner provides a letter on company letterhead accepting responsibility for obtaining the City of Houston's Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) Class A, B or C, generator operating permits for the proposed community grease interceptor. *Ref. Class definitions in: City of Houston Code of Ordinances, Ch. 47. Water & Sewers, Art. XI. Transportation and Treatment of Certain Wastes, Section 47-417.*
2. The owner accepts responsibility for all interceptor maintenance and cleaning of all common grease interceptor systems regardless of lease agreements with tenants.
3. Interceptors are sized appropriately per code with engineering calculations for the total load of all food service tenants connected to the individual interceptor. Each individual food service tenant shall submit these calculations when the food service tenant construction documents are submitted to the City for plan review and approval.
4. The owner provides trained maintenance personnel 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
5. The owner agrees to make available to all food service tenants a current copy of the engineering calculations accurately describing all connected loads.

In this section, the term "business establishment" refers to the specific business that produces effluent that contains FOG's. These are generally food service establishments but may include qualified facilities or building owners complying with this interpretation.

***Continued...***



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<b>Community Grease Interceptor Requirements, Cont.</b>					

These items must be provided for all projects affecting connected tenants as well as any proposed new connections. Projects with occupant load increases and lease expansions of existing connected tenants will require that the *Community Grease Interceptor* documentation also be attached to the construction documents when submitting to the City for plan review and permit approval.

***CITY OF HOUSTON CODE OF ORDINANCES, CH, 47. WATER & SEWERS, ART. XI.***

***Transportation and Treatment of Certain Wastes, Section 47-417.***

***Responsibilities of Agents and Employees.***

*The responsibilities created under Chapter 47 Article XI, for Class A site operators, biological pretreatment service providers, disposers, generators and transporters shall extend to the owners and other persons having possession and control of the site, facilities or equipment as well as to their officers, agents and employees having responsibilities for their operations.*

***(Ord. No. 97-196, § 4, 2-19-97; Ord. No. 07-544, § 6, 5-9-07; Ord. No. 08-1229, § 6, 12-30-08)***

***Class - A Site Operator, means a person having ownership or control of a site where Class A waste is generated***

***Class - A Waste, means wastes and wastewater removed from domestic septic tanks used by single or multiple residential units, schools, hotels/motels, restaurants, and similar establishments that primarily generate waste of a type associated with domestic/residential uses. Class A waste does not include waste removed from a septic tank that receives non-domestic types of commercial wastewater or receives industrial wastewater, nor does the term include grease removed from a grease trap or grit trap/lint trap waste.***

***Class - B Waste, means oily water, FOG, grease trap waste, sewage sludge, and portable toilet waste.***

***Class - C Waste, means any materials collected in a septic tank, grit trap, lint trap, retention pond, utility service vault or any similar device, which materials result from or are incidental to any process of industrial, manufacturing, institutional or commercial operations including, but not limited to, mobile or stationary car or truck washing, pavement washing, environmental testing facilities and commercial laundries or Laundromats. However, this term shall not include domestic septic tank waste.***

**NOTE:** Each generator permit or registration certificate shall be conspicuously posted at the site for which it is issued. Upon request the permit or registration certificate shall be available for inspection, Sec. 47-427. Additional agents and employees responsibilities are identified in Chapter 47 of the City Code of Ordinances Article XI.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron D. King".

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>March 6, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation: Floor Drains for S-1, S-2, and M Occupancies</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>1017.1</b>				

A separator and all necessary floor drains will be required in service station bays and repair garages. They will not be required in garages used only for vehicle parking or under service station pump canopies.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>March 9, 1995</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Location of Downspouts</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Chapter 11</b>				

Gutters and downspouts accepting roof water are to be designed using Chapter 11 of the Houston *Plumbing Code*. All downspouts shall be connected to the gutter not to exceed 60 feet distance between downspout connections.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>June 1, 2022</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Reduced Pressure Zone (RPZ) Backflow Preventers</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code and Infrastructure Design Manual (IDM)</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>603.3 (UPC) and 7.2.01.E.1, #4 (IDM)</b>				

In accordance with Section 7.2.01.E.1 of the Infrastructure Design Manual (IDM) that was revised on July 1, 2021, any commercial projects submitted after October 1, 2021 will require the following:

1. A dedicated water main easement for commercial development with public on-site water mains for fire protection; or,
2. Provide fire service meters adjacent to the public right-of-way with an above ground reduced pressure zone (RPZ) type backflow preventer downstream of the meter for each private fire line.

All projects submitted and approved prior to October 1, 2021 will be inspected and accepted having a previously approved double check backflow preventer.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. King", written over a horizontal line.

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



**City of Houston  
Building Code Enforcement  
CODE WORD 2021**

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 3, 2023</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Use of ProVent and SoVent Plumbing Systems</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>711 and Chapter 7</b>				

The use of ProVent or SoVent plumbing systems shall be approved based on compliance with all of the following specific conditions:

**1)** The ProVent or SoVent plumbing system is designed specifically for the structure in question as currently proposed; **2)** A Texas-licensed professional engineer shall seal, sign, and date all plumbing plans; **3)** All suds-producing fixtures as defined by Section 711.1 of the Houston *Plumbing Code* shall be served by a separate conventional drain waste and vent system; **4)** All other code requirements shall be met; **5)** Combustible materials located in ducts or plenums shall comply with all requirements of Section 602.2 of the Houston *Mechanical Code*; and **6)** The building owner agrees that no future modifications to the ProVent or SoVent plumbing system shall be made with prior City of Houston approval of plumbing plans that are designed, sealed, signed, and dated by a Texas-licensed professional engineer.

The review and approval process shall include the following:

1. Plumbing Plan Review shall require that a notarized acceptance letter signed by the building owner be attached to the plans. The letter shall specifically identify the name and position (authority) of the person signing, and shall specifically list all of the above conditions along with the signatory's expressed acceptance of those conditions.
2. Upon approval of the plans, a hard hold shall be placed in the project 109 and situs 126 screens as follows:

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>Department</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>PLUMBING INS</b>
<b>Hold Type</b>	<b>H</b>	
<b>Reason</b>	<b>ENG. PLANS REQ'D FOR MODS TO PROVENT PLUMBING</b>	

(Specify ProVent or SoVent, as applicable.) This hold shall never be released. It shall remain in the system in perpetuity and shall only be allowed to have a temporary override done by the Building Official, the Plumbing Inspections Division Manager, or the Plumbing Inspections Assistant Chief in order to have a permit sold or finalized.

**NOTE:** In buildings with multiple floors or suite numbers, this hold shall be placed in the 126 screens of each and every floor or suite number so that it will appear on any future project generated in the system for that building.

Approved:   
Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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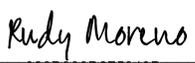
<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021 – P12</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>July 17, 2024</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Alternative Material for Detention Systems</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Plumbing Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>Section 103.1 and Tables 701.2 &amp; 1701.2</b>				

This Code Word interpretation is intended to clarify that the use of Aluminized Type 2 corrugated metal pipe (CMP) is an acceptable equivalent material for stormwater detention applications when the CMP has been tested in accordance with ASTM A929 – *Standard Specification for Steel Sheet, Metallic-Coated by the Hot-Dip Process for Corrugated Steel Pipe*.

The ASTM A929 standard provides requirements for the manufacturing of corrugated steel pipe for storm sewers, culverts, drains, and similar uses. Although not specifically identified in Tables 701.2 or 1701.2 as an acceptable standard or material, Aluminized Type 2 CMP tested in accordance with ASTM A929 provides an equivalent corrosion resistant material that, for the purpose intended, meets the minimum prescribed code requirements in quality, strength, and effectiveness for underground detention systems.

This interpretation is intended only for detention system applications and does not apply to storm building drains or storm building sewers as defined in the Houston adopted Plumbing Code.

For inspection purposes, inspectors will need to request the pipe testing information from the supplier at the time of the inspection. The testing report will provide the *heat number* and the *testing criteria* per ASTM A929. The inspector will be able to verify that such testing information matches the pipe installed in the field for each specific project.

Approved: DocuSigned by:  
  
026D386D275940D...  
Rudy Moreno, Jr.  
Interim Building Official



**City of Houston  
Building Code Enforcement  
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<b>CW No:</b>	<b>2021-N01</b>	<b>Page:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>January 21, 2003</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Commercial Energy Code Compliance at Certain Stages of Construction</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Commercial Energy Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>All</b>				

To provide consistency in requirements the attached guideline has been developed to determine the level of energy code compliance required for each type of project or stage of construction listed in the table.

For the purpose of this code word, “building envelope” shall mean the structural portion of the building surrounding conditioned space that separates the conditioned and unconditioned spaces.

<b>City of Houston Energy Code Compliance Policy</b>		
<b>Scope</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>New Shell Buildings</b> <i>(applies when the occupancy is likely to have future HVAC)</i> i.e. retail / office / warehouse  Unoccupied unconditioned buildings may be exempt from IECC.	Location & extent of building conditioned space is not known at present ( <i>i.e. spec office/warehouse</i> )	Full building envelope compliance required for areas not exempt. Exempt areas to be indicated on the plans. Envelope and Exterior Lighting COMcheck required.
	Shell is for building that will be fully conditioned ( <i>i.e. strip centers, multi-story</i> )	Full building envelope compliance required, depending on applicable code. Envelope and Exterior Lighting COMcheck required.
<b>New Build Out</b> <i>(first time build-out in permitted shell structure)</i> COMcheck or C407 report required.	Shell has a compliant building envelope.	Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing compliance only.
	Shell has a non-compliant building envelope	Full building envelope compliance and Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing compliance for the new build out.
<b>Change in Occupancy</b> <i>COMcheck or C407 report required, or Engineer's letter certifying existing equipment will suffice for same energy use.</i>	New occupancy uses more energy.	Apply Energy Code to altered portions.
	New occupancy uses the same or less energy.	Certify energy use is not increased for exemption to compliance with Energy Code.
<b>Historical Buildings</b>	Report of historic designation for the building is provided and approved.	Compliance with Energy Code is exempt.

*Continued...*



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<b>Commercial Energy Code Compliance, Cont.</b>					

<b>City of Houston Energy Code Compliance Policy</b>		
<b>Scope</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>Previously Unconditioned Spaces</b> <i>(adding air HVAC equipment to unconditioned spaces or buildings, or adding-on to a conditioned space inside an unconditioned space) i.e. add-on to an office inside a warehouse.</i>	All walls and roof/ceiling already exist in the unconditioned space	Building envelope components surrounding entire newly conditioned area shall comply. Other affected systems shall also comply. COMcheck(s) or C407 report required.
	Adding a conditioned space to a previously unconditioned area with new walls or ceilings.	New and changed portions of the building envelope shall comply. Affected systems other than the building components shall comply. If the new change in space configuration triggers the vestibule requirements, a vestibule shall be installed. COMcheck(s) or C407 report required.
<b>Remodels / Alterations</b> <b>Note:</b> Windows that are completely replaced including frame and sash must comply. <u>Some Repairs</u> are exempt, i.e. glazing repairs (one or two windows) need not comply.	Work affects the building envelope	Building envelope or portion of the building envelope (including roofs) must comply if a substantial full space of the wall are "corner to corner", or ceiling "edge to edge", is exposed or altered. Affected systems other than the building envelope components shall comply with the Energy Code.
	Work does not affect the building envelope	No building envelope compliance required. Other affected systems shall comply with the Energy Code.
<b>Electrical</b> <i>(Any work involving light switches or that involve partitions resulting in changing office sizes will trigger switching requirements of the Energy Code)</i>	Work does not involve changing or adding light fixtures	No requirements for electrical budget analysis. Existing fixtures may be relocated.
	Work involves changing or adding light fixtures	In the electrical energy budget, analyze only the area to be served by the lights that are removed. Determine the Energy Code maximum wattage for just that area and the new lights can be installed as long as they comply.
	Work involves obvious overall reduction in wattage (i.e. removing lights or replacement lights are all low watt)	Electrical energy budget analysis does not need to be completed.

Approved:   
 Byron D. King  
 Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>October 15, 1996</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Utility Release Option</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Electrical Code</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>302.1</b>				

**PURPOSE:** Utility release options allow such items as dishwashers, ranges, condensing units, charcoal cooktops and other such fixtures and appliances to be absent from the completed residence during the final inspection while providing approval for the release of utility connections.

**PERMIT:** A permit for each craft involved in a particular appliance or fixture is required in order to facilitate a Utility Release Option. Permits must be purchased at the same time the regular permit is obtained or at any point during construction of the house. This permit is a separate distinct project number from the original and should indicate “for appliances not set. REF: \_\_\_\_\_” (original project number)

**PROCEDURE**

**Electrical**

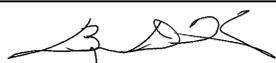
A “Miscellaneous Electrical Permit” a separate distinct project number for “appliances not set REF: \_\_\_\_\_” for those items that will be absent at the time of final inspection must be obtained by the Master Electrician or Residential Appliance Installation Contractor using a new project number. This type of permit is called a “single trade miscellaneous permit”. Contractors shall schedule a final inspection as usual. The existence of a miscellaneous permit will indicate to the inspector that certain electrical items will be absent. At the time the inspection is called into the Electrical Section, the contractor shall clearly indicate that there is a miscellaneous permit and that certain electrical items will be absent at the time of final inspection. All electrical other than the specific item(s) to remain absent shall be complete and in compliance with the code. Upon approval by the inspector, the electrical permit on the primary project number will be finalized. The miscellaneous permit remains active and at such time the absent items are complete, the contractor must call for inspection using the single trade miscellaneous permit number.

The single-trade project will remain active for a period of one-hundred eighty (180) days. During that period, it is expected that the absent connection, equipment or fixture will be installed and inspected.

The electrical contractor or Residential Appliance Installation Contractor must remain vigilant and secure inspection as soon as the absent items have been installed.

**Important Note:** Construction superintendents, builders, developers or others in control of construction projects must direct their MEP subcontractors to contact the Building Inspection Division, City of Houston, for instructions and assistance in establishing the appropriate utility release permits. Only licensed contractors may obtain the necessary permits.

**Electrical Inspections Section ..... 832-394-8860**

<p>Approved: </p> <p align="center">Byron D. King Houston Building Official</p>
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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>February 28, 2000</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Interpretation and Policy: Hazardous Materials Storage Canopies</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Fire and Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>5004.13 (IFC) and 414.6.1 (IBC)</b>				

An automatic fire-extinguishing system will not be required for an open canopy that meets the requirements of Section 5004.13 of the Fire Code and is used for sheltering outdoor hazardous material unless the sprinkler system is required by the Fire Code for outdoor storage. The canopy will be classified in the appropriate H occupancy classification with the notation on the permit "Canopy for Hazard Material Storage." All such structures shall be routed to the Fire Department for approval.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>September 20, 2012</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Clarification: Elevator Signage</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Fire and Building Codes</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>604.4 (IFC) and 3002.3 (IBC)</b>				

The Houston *Fire Code* Section 604.4 requires an approved pictorial sign to be posted adjacent to each elevator call station.

The approved pictorial sign shall also contain a correctly oriented diagram showing the location and identification of the stairs on the floor in relationship to the elevator. The top of the sign shall not exceed 6 feet (1.8 m) above the finish floor level.

Approved:

Byron D. King  
Houston Building Official



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CW No:	2021 – F03	Page:	1	of	1
PUBLICATION:	August 15, 2025				
SUBJECT:	MAQ Thresholds for A2L Refrigerants				
CODE(S):	Fire Code and Building Code				
SECTION(S)	Section 5003 (IFC) and Section 307 (IBC)				

**PURPOSE**

To clarify the application of Maximum Allowable Quantities (MAQ) for A2L refrigerants to align with amendments adopted under the Houston *Mechanical Code* allowing the use of A2L refrigerants.

**BACKGROUND**

In late 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a rule that implemented an 85% phasedown of hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) refrigerants nationwide. As a result, refrigerant manufacturers, equipment designers, and national standard and code organizations have increasingly transitioned to alternative refrigerants such as A2L refrigerants.

To support this shift, the City of Houston adopted specific amendments to the Houston *Mechanical Code* (2021) allowing the use of A2L refrigerants, consistent with updates published in the 2024 edition of the *Uniform Mechanical Code*.

However, while provisions permitting the use of A2L refrigerants were adopted in the Houston *Mechanical Code*, the corresponding fire safety thresholds – particularly the MAQs for A2L refrigerants – were not explicitly incorporated from corresponding updates to the 2024 editions of the *International Fire Code* and *International Building Code*. This omission has created a regulatory misalignment that may result in inconsistencies in enforcement and permitting.

This Code Word is intended to address this issue by authorizing MAQ thresholds and related provisions for A2L refrigerants as outlined in the following ICC publications:

[Required Changes to the 2021 International Fire Code to Comply with the A2L Refrigerant Related Code Provisions of the 2024 I-Codes](#)

[Required Changes to the 2021 International Building Code to Comply with the A2L Refrigerant Related Code Provisions of the 2024 I-Codes](#)

**ENFORCEMENT**

For the purpose of providing additional clarification and supporting the transition to A2L refrigerants, the *Building Official* and *Fire Code Official* recognizes the above referenced ICC publications as an acceptable supplemental resource for determining the MAQs associated with A2L refrigerants in new and existing facilities.

These thresholds apply to structures where A2L refrigerants are used or stored, on the condition that all applicable safety controls, ventilation requirements, and detections systems are provided in accordance with the referenced ICC publications above and the Houston *Construction Code*.

Approved:

Rudy Moreno, Jr.  
Interim Building Official



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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	<b>February 23, 2026</b>				
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Policy: Drone Delivery Sites / Stations</b>				
<b>CODE(S):</b>	<b>Houston Construction Code / Code of Ordinances</b>				
<b>SECTION(S)</b>	<b>IBC Sections 104.1 &amp; 105; IFC and NEC (as applicable)</b>				

**Background / Details**

This Code Word is intended to provide consistent guidance for permitting and review of drone delivery sites (also referred as “drone delivery stations”), including associated pads/landing areas, appurtenant structures, equipment, and utility/power features. This policy is issued under the Building Official’s authority to render interpretations and adopt policies and procedures clarifying application of the adopted code.

For purposes of this policy, where proposed drone delivery facilities are limited to unoccupied accessory structures/equipment (pads/platforms, cabinets, racks, screens, similar appurtenances) in support of a primary occupancy, such components are generally anticipated to be evaluated as accessory in nature (often consistent with Group U accessory structures where applicable), subject to the Building Official’s determination and the adopted codes.

Drone delivery pads, structures, and/or equipment may be treated as an accessory site function when they are located on the same property (or under the same site control/leasehold) as the primary use, and the drone operations are incidental and subordinate to the primary occupancy (e.g., warehouse, distribution, retail, etc.) with no independent tenant space, public assembly, or staffed occupant area associated with the drone facility.

**Scope / Policy**

This policy applies when a project includes any dedicated drone delivery operations area, proposed as an accessory site function, and includes but is not limited to:

- Drone landing/takeoff pads or elevated platforms
- Drone staging areas, storage, charging, swap/charging cabinets, maintenance/repair areas
- Canopies, screens/walls, fencing, gates, bollards, equipment racks
- Site/electrical work: panels, feeders, disconnects, underground/overhead service, lighting, receptacles, communications equipment
- Power sources: generators, battery/inverter systems, fuel tanks, etc.

Drone delivery sites/stations that function as an independent principal use (standalone configurations) shall be classified and permitted based on their actual use/function as determined by the Authority Having Jurisdiction and may require additional permitting/approvals beyond those typical for accessory structures.

**Permit Submittal Requirements**

Construction documents shall include, as applicable, the following:

- Site plan showing property lines, buildings, drone landing/takeoff area(s), equipment locations, clearances/setbacks to property lines and adjacent structures, access gates, and fire access provisions.



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- Equipment schedule/cutsheets for charging cabinets, shelters, platforms, communications gear, and any power equipment.
- Electrical one-lines and load calculations, including demand for chargers and any standby and/or temporary power provisions.
- Operations narrative describing use (delivery-only vs. staging/maintenance), hours of operation, number/type of drones, etc.
- Documented evidence of applicable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and National Aerospace System (NAS) approvals and/or authorizations confirming the proposed drone delivery site/station (and associated operations) is permitted to operate at the proposed location, including any required waivers, authorizations, or operating limitations/conditions.

### **Power Source Policy**

#### **Permanent utility power**

Where a drone delivery site is intended to operate beyond initial commissioning, permanent power shall be permitted and provided (electrical permit(s) and service approvals as applicable). Temporary power allowances below are not a substitute for permanent service.

#### **Temporary diesel/gas generator use**

Temporary use of diesel or gasoline generators may be allowed only for initial startup/commissioning, subject to all applicable permits and Houston *Fire Code* requirements, and limited as follows:

- Initial allowance: up to 90 days from the documented date the site begins drone delivery operations (or energization/commissioning date, as determined by the AHJ).  
**NOTE:** Extensions will be strictly limited and may be granted only with justifiable cause and requests to extend temporary operation shall require documentation showing **a)** an active permit path for permanent utility power, and **b)** an installation schedule/utility coordination.
- Generator installation shall be shown on plans and include, but not be limited to, the rating (kW), fuel type(s), method/quantity of fuel storage, separation/clearances, protection from vehicle impact where applicable, exhaust routing/clearances, and required disconnecting means.

#### **Battery generators / portable battery-inverter systems**

Requests to use battery-based generators (portable battery/inverter systems, trailer-mounted battery packs, containerized battery units, etc.) will be evaluated on a case-by-case and shall generally require an Alternate Method (AM) submittal demonstrating equivalency to the Houston *Construction Code*, including listing/labeling documentation, installation details, protection features, and any Houston *Fire Code* implications (battery chemistry, energy capacity, location, ventilation, thermal management, emergency shutdown, signage, separation / exposure considerations, and firefighting access).

### **Additional Considerations**

Drone delivery sites/stations shall meet all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and National Aerospace System (NAS) requirements for operation.

Drone delivery sites/stations are subject to any applicable regulations provided in Chapter 30 (Noise and Sound Level Regulation) of the Houston *Code of Ordinances*.

Installation of any buildings, structures, electrical work, equipment, etc. that is regulated by the Houston *Construction Code* shall require applicable permits and inspections prior to operation.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Christopher Shannahan, CBO, FM  
Houston Building Official